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"I OWE YOU NO RESPECT—NO OBEDIENCE!" SAID INA. "WHAT CLAIM HAVE YOU ON ME?"

SET APART.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

SHE was a girl of nineteen, with a sweet English face, framed by masses of soft brown hair. She looked at you with two large dreamy gray eyes, whose glance met yours with frank simplicity. Her colour varied with every passing feeling. She could be grave or gay, lively or silent, as the mood suggested. But there was nothing in her beauty—nothing in her fair girlish beauty—to make you guess that her lot in life had in it anything peculiar. You never could have known, unless you had been told, that Ina Fortescue was destined by fate to be one apart.

And no one knew why. No human creature in the dear sleepy village where Ina grew up

could have explained the destiny which awaited her; though everyone could have told you, as a matter of course, that Miss Fortescue had a peculiar history.

The story of the past was public property. It had been told to her over and over again.

Mrs. Cameron, who was not good at keeping secrets, had related it to all her friends at the time it took place. Ravenstoke rather prided itself on the occurrence—as the one incident of romance the place had ever known.

The story was short and simple. Left a widow, very slenderly provided for, Mrs. Cameron had thought of opening a school, and had gone as far as inserting an advertisement for pupils in the London papers.

Only one answer ever came. A gentleman called one blustering March night, and demanded to see the widow alone.

She described him afterwards as tall and stern, with a dark handsome face, and such commanding manners! She did not think anyone could have resisted his authority.

He went to the point at once. He had one child, a motherless girl of four. He did not require for her a school, but a home. What would be Mrs. Cameron's terms to receive his daughter, and make a home for her.

Mrs. Cameron gasped, and ventured the question, might she receive other pupils? The answer was prompt. Certainly not. Miss Fortescue must be her sole charge. He was willing to pay five hundred a year, on condition that his daughter received a lady's education, and a mother's care.

He had heard of Mrs. Cameron before, and would be perfectly contented if she undertook the charge.

There were conditions attached. The child was never to sleep a day away from Ravenstoke, and never to make a visit without her guardian. She was to be dressed well and simply—educated as became a gentlewoman. But she was to be taught from her earliest years that her life was a shadowed one, that she must never expect the amusements and gaiety she saw others enjoy.

Mrs. Cameron was amazed.

"Do you mean the little girl is so delicate you fear she will not grow up?"

"She is in perfect health."

"Perhaps her mother was delicate, and—"

"My wife never allied anything, until she gave her life for our daughter's. Understand me, madame, there must be no theories of your own to account for my wishes. I make you a plain proposal. It rests with you to accept or decline it."

The poverty-stricken widow thought of the five hundred a year and grew brave.

"You would wish to see her sometimes?"

"When I do I can come here. I should require you to send me a yearly account of the child's health. My bankers will send you a cheque quarterly in advance. For the rest, my conditions are few. She is never to sleep out of Ravenstoke; never to make a visit unaccompanied by yourself; and you are to make her understand her future must be different from that of other girls."

The extraordinary bargain was concluded.

Mrs. Cameron, who had been vastly pitted by Ravenstoke for her poverty, and even would have thought herself fortunate to be able to earn two pounds a week, by one brief half-hour's interview was provided for far more handsomely than in her husband's lifetime.

There was no demand for references. Mr. Fortescue declared his friends knew Mrs. Cameron well, and, on her part, how could she express a wish for credentials when her visitor showed himself so generous.

It was a strange incident altogether, and when she told of Mr. Fortescue's visit and her golden hopes, her friends were inclined to laugh at her as a visionary.

But not for long. In three days time arrived bank-notes for a hundred and twenty-five pounds, and a little girl, led by a respectably dressed woman, and accompanied by three large boxes.

If Mrs. Cameron had hoped for any information from Ina's previous caretaker she was disappointed. The woman was frank to a fault, but she evidently knew nothing beyond that she had answered an advertisement about a nurse-child, and received the little girl she now brought to Ravenstoke.

"She was but six months old then, ma'am," said the nurse, respectfully, "and she's been like my own ever since; but my husband he's wild to be off to the diamond mines in Africa, and from all we hear there's a fine fortune to be made there. But it's not the place for a bit of a child like that, even if her pa's were induced to let her go, which of course, being she's the only one, he isn't."

"She is not at all like him," said Mrs. Cameron thoughtfully. "I suppose she takes after her mother?"

"Like enough," replied the woman; "but she's a dear little creature, ma'am, and many's the time I've wondered her father could bring himself to part from her."

"Perhaps he couldn't help it?"

"Way, he rolls in money, ma'am! Leastways he do seem to, and a rare open-handed gentleman he is; but he never comes near the child. She might be dead and buried before he knew of it."

"Do you mean he never came to see her?"

"Never once," returned the woman, shortly. Ina made herself at home promptly. The motherless girl and the childless widow seemed in a little while to belong to each other. Mrs. Cameron had but one fear. If Mr. Fortescue changed his plans for his daughter, how terribly she would miss the comfortable home his payment secured her.

She was a prudent body, and saved a little for such a catastrophe; but the years came and went without showing any hint of Mr. Fortescue's changing his mind. The money arrived punctually to the day, once a year. Mrs. Cameron forwarded a report of her charge's welfare, but no news came of the absent father; and for all they heard of him at the cottage he might have been dead and buried.

As Ina grew up the difficulties of the position began to appear. She was the darling of all the

village; everyone loved her. There was no one among her young friends half so popular; yet when she was pressed to spend a few days with them at the seaside, or to go to London for a glimpse of sight-seeing, although the invites were Mrs. Cameron's old and trusted friends—although they promised to care for Ina as their own child—the widow was obliged to refuse. She had promised Mr. Fortescue his daughter should never be a night away from Ravenstoke, she used to say, in reply to all entreaties, and she must keep her word.

And now Ina was nineteen. For fifteen years she had lived in the seclusion of the country village, and seen no one beyond its people; and yet—such is the power of birth and inheritance—no one could possibly have taken her for a village girl. She looked aristocratic to the tips of her fingers; the education given her had brought out the intelligence of her character. She sang sweetly, played with taste and feeling, was a fair linguist, and an excellent English scholar—just the girl parents might have been proud of, and who seemed fitted to make the sunshine of a good man's home.

Mrs. Cameron was thinking over Ina's future one bright June afternoon. She loved the girl almost as though she had been her own; and she could not bear to remember Mr. Fortescue's cruel words that she was doomed to live life apart, nor could she see any reason for it. In health, intellect, and breeding she left nothing to desire. If (and the widow in her bewilderment sometimes thought this must be the true explanation of the mystery) there had been anything irregular in her parents' marriage, surely there was no cause to vent it upon their child, even if she had really no name of her own. Ina was too fair and attractive to be left lonely and unprotected.

And this played no small part in Mrs. Cameron's musings. There was someone in Ravenstoke quite ready to give her another name instead of Fortescue. Randolph Douglas was a distant cousin of the widow's, and he had come to Ravenstoke on a sketching expedition. He was of good family, fair present income, and great expectations. His father had wished him to be a soldier even while owning there was no real cause for his following a profession at all; but Mr. Douglas was a born artist, and his ambition was to see his work on the walls of the Academy. As in all else he was a model son he was allowed to follow his own wishes. He had inherited a few hundreds a year from his mother, which proved ample for his simple wants. He never applied to his father for an allowance, never ran into debt; and so the old man, who was not without a good deal of common-sense, decided that Randolph was a boy he need not feel ashamed of, and gave up envying his neighbour, Lord Canten, his son's gay uniform, since the peer whispered to him, in confidence, he should have to sell a goodly quantity of timber to make up the sum required for his heir's expensive hobbies.

Poor Mrs. Cameron! The Douglas family had been her "grand relations" ever since she could remember. A kind of feudal loyalty bound her to them; and when Randolph came down to Ravenstoke she had gladly bidden him to her house, and given him of her best, and now her kindly hospitality was likely to cost her dear.

It had pleased—judging from that morning's correspondence—neither Sir Ralph nor Mr. Fortescue, and it might be it had led to a real grief for the young people she had so innocently thrown together.

Sir Ralph wrote, briefly thanking her for the hospitality she had shown his boy, but expressing a hope that she was not letting Randolph fancy himself in love with her adopted daughter. "I need not tell you, Mary," wrote the sage old Baronet, "a child of yours would be welcome to me as my son's wife. But I hold in horror all adopted relationships. If people desert their own children, and let them be taken by other people, depend upon it there is a flaw somewhere. So if you observe any tenderness between Randolph and your young lady I hope you will send him about his business."

This was bad enough, for in her poor little

pride the widow had suffered her richer kindred to remain under a misapprehension.

She called Ina her "dear little girl," quite forgetting to mention the peculiar arrangement between her and Mr. Fortescue, which made her really only the paid chaperon and protectress of the child.

This was bad enough, but there was worse to come. A short note, in the hand only familiar to her because of the signature on those, her welcome quarterly cheques.

"DEAR MADAME,—It has come to my ears that you are permitting an acquaintance between my daughter and a young man! Is not this forgetting the nature of our agreement? For reasons it is needless to dwell on, my child's life must be one apart. And only trouble can come of her permitting herself to dream of love or marriage. I hope to come down to Ravenstoke in a day or two. Meanwhile I must urge you to put a stop to the acquaintance I have alluded to at once.—Yours faithfully, "FORTESCUE."

It struck her as a little odd he used no initial, but this was lost sight of in the terror that he meant to remove Ina. Not only would the widow lose her liberal income, but she really loved the girl she had brought up, and the mystery thrown over Ina's history terrified her.

Why should not the child marry Randolph if he loved her? They would make the handsomest couple ever seen in Ravenstoke!

Sir Ralph's objections would melt into thin air when he saw the sweet-faced bride; while as to Mr. Fortescue, surely if he had been content to renounce his daughter for fifteen years, her future could be no concern of his.

Enter through the French windows Randolph Douglas, a smile on his handsome face, which vanished as he caught sight of Mrs. Cameron's troubled looks.

"My cousin Mary, what's the matter?"

"Where is Ina?"

"Mrs. Fortescue has been carried off by the Lady Rector to give her opinion on the choice of boys for the Sunday school treat. Being a question I didn't feel qualified to decide, I declined to go to the Rectory, and came here. What is the matter?" he repeated kindly. "You were invisible when I called this morning, and now you looked bothered."

He was nine-and-twenty, and had never had a trouble in his life beyond Sir Ralph's faculty for match-making; but he was neither unsympathetic nor unfeeling. He believed all lonely women were fond of shabby investments and ascribed Mrs. Cameron's eyes to the news that some bubble company in which she was interested had failed.

"You mustn't fret," said Randolph, consolingly. "I daresay things are not so bad after all. Tell me all about it, and let me see if I can't do something!"

"You!" exclaimed Mary Cameron, smiling in spite of herself. "Why, Ran, it is all about you."

"Good gracious!"

"Look here!" and she gave him his father's letter, "I got this this morning."

Ran read it through in no wise dismayed.

"I can't imagine how he found it out, but I know for weeks my mind has been made up. I shall marry Ina, or go single to my grave. I should have spoken to her long ago, but I feared to risk all by asking her too suddenly. I am glad you have given me a chance of telling you my hopes. You'll be on my side, won't you, Cousin Mary? The governor may refuse to increase my income, but I've seven hundred a year from my mother which no one can rob me of, and Ina is not ambitious. We could be happy on that."

"Very! But, Ran, don't you see? Doesn't this letter tell you Ina is not my daughter?"

"I never thought she was!" returned Randolph. "Why, I have heard the story from herself. Her father brought her here fifteen years ago, and has never been to see her since. I don't mind telling you, Cousin Mary, I believe Mr. Fortescue is a thoroughly bad lot; but I would risk even his sponging on us, rather than lose Ina!"

"My dear Ran!"—on I how the poor woman wished she had not made that little reservation in writing to her relation, but spoke frankly of her poverty—"you don't quite understand. I was far too poor to adopt a child. When my husband died I thought of opening a school. Mr. Fortescue offered, if I would take charge of his daughter, and have no other pupils, to make a handsome allowance for her. From the day Ina came here I have been paid five hundred a-year for her expenses."

It was Ran's turn to look troubled now. "Then he is a rich man!"

"I have no idea. This is not all, Ran. Read this note from him which came to-day."

Randolph's comment was prompt.

"He must have a spy in the village."

"But, Ran, what does it mean? Will he take her away? It would be like losing a child of my own. And he is so hard and stern, I should dread the thought of her being in his power!"

"Have you only seen him once?"

"Only once."

"And Ina?"

"Ina has no recollection of him at all."

"What is his profession?"

"I have no idea."

"He looked a gentleman!"

"Oh, yes, every inch! Ina is not in the least like him. I suppose she takes after her mother."

"Alive?"

"No; she died at Ina's birth."

"That might explain it. He can't forgive the poor child for costing her mother's life."

Mrs. Cameron shook her head.

"Then he would be glad to think of her as married, which would free him of all responsibility. No, it is not that. And why does he talk of her living a life apart?"

Randolph shook his head.

"I don't like it."

Mrs. Cameron's anxiety was all for Ina.

"If he is unkind to her, Ran, it would break her heart!"

"He shall never do that!" declared Randolph, bravely. "If only Ina will consent she shall be my wife, and I will defend her against all the fathers in the world!"

But the widow shook her head.

"Think of Sir Ralph."

"His bark is worse than his bite!" replied the son affectionately, if a little disrespectfully.

"He would never hold out long against us. He has always wished for a daughter, and where could he find a fairer, sweeter one than Ina?"

"You forget," said Mrs. Cameron, hurriedly, "she is but thirteen. For two years her father has complete authority over her; and, to judge from his letter, would he be likely to give his consent?"

Randolph looked grave.

"I shall speak to Ina to-night. Don't look so troubled, Cousin Mary. She may refuse me, and then you will have no further trouble; but if not," and the young man's eyes brightened, "depend upon it, if my darling gives me a ray of hope, I will win her in spite of all the fathers in the world! Why, if he saw we were in earnest, he would be sure to give in!"

"You have not seen him. I tell you, Ran, he looked as stern as iron!"

"Ah! here comes Ina," said Randolph, who had been looking from the window. "I shall go and meet her. I know she meant to pick some strawberries for tea. When you see me again, Cousin Mary, my fate will be decided!"

He came up with Ina just by the strawberry beds.

She was a strikingly pretty girl, and well-deserved the title given her by her admirers, of the "belle of Ravenstoke." Of medium height, a slight, willowy figure, she moved with perfect grace. Her brown hair had a golden tint, as though the summer sun had kissed it. Her face had the prettiest wild-rose bloom, and her grey eyes were tender and full of intelligence.

But one thing always struck keen observers about Ina. She had come to Ravenstoke a child of four. For fifteen years no unkind word had ever been spoken to her, and yet there was at times an expression almost of dread upon her

face. She seemed in abject terror of harsh treatment, or in fear of some danger imminent to her, unthought of by all others.

"Ina."

She started. It was the first time Randolph had ever called her by her name.

A deep blush dyed her cheek. He took her hand and drew her towards a rustic bench.

"I want to talk to you, Ina. Child, how you tremble. Surely you are not afraid of me?"

"Oh, no. But—"

"Never mind the but," said Randolph, fondly. "Do you know what I am going to tell you, Ina? Very soon I shall have to leave Ravenstoke."

Every trace of colour faded from her cheek.

"Must you really go? We shall miss you so!"

"I must, indeed, leave Ravenstoke. But, Ina, if I have my will you shall not miss me, dear. I want you to come with me."

"To come with you?"

"As my much-loved wife! Ina, I can't tell when I began to love you. Sweetheart, I am not good at speaking of what I feel; but if you will only trust me I think I can promise you shall be happy. I love you so I must be able to win your heart in time."

"And I love you," she whispered. "Only I never guessed it till this moment. Life has seemed quite different since I knew you!"

"Then you will be mine?"

But the question brought her back to everyday life. She remembered the sad trouble impressed on her from childhood.

Not for her were amusements and gaiety, not for her joy or love. Her life was a marked one; her fate must be different from that of the girls she saw around her.

"I cannot; oh, I cannot!"

"And why?"

"Don't you know?" she blushed. "Ran's your cousin told you? There is a great shadow on my life, and my future must always be dark and lonely. My father said so."

"Dear!" cried Randolph, hotly, "no human being has the power to predict what another's future will be; and the father who has neglected you for fifteen years has forfeited all claim to your love and obedience. Only promise to be my wife, and leave me to deal with him."

She did not withdraw the little hand he had taken. She looked into his eyes with a world of sorrowful tenderness in her own.

"But it may be disgrace. Have you thought of that? Before you came I used to puzzle over my history very much. I wondered so what could be the mystery that hung over me!"

"It can be no disgrace of yours," said Ran, firmly. "You are pure and good as an angel!"

"But my father—I never say it to Mrs. Cameron, she would not like it—but I fancy sometimes he has done something very wrong, and he is always moving about for fear it should be found out."

"My darling, what shall I say to convince you? Listen, Ina! Were your father a criminal, even, it would not change my wishes! Nothing does change true love! Whatever your father may be, Ina, it is you whom I love, and his sins have nothing to do with you. It is not even as though you had passed your life at his side, and his training and influence could have left its mark upon your character! No! You have only to give me your promise, dear, and the whole world should not part us. If Mr. Fortescue is very angry he might prevent my seeing you for two years; but when once you are of age no father in the world can hinder our marriage!"

The little fingers slid into his. "The sweet voice whispered,—

"Are you sure—quite sure?"

"I am certain, sweetheart, that I love you; and that I want you to be my wife. What an unbelieving little thing you are, Ina!"

She trembled violently.

"I shall never forgive myself if I bring sorrow upon you! Oh, Mr. Douglas! if my life is really shadowed, have I a right to let you take my promise?"

"Too late!" said Ran, firmly. "You have

given me your promise, and I shall not let you take it back, I can assure you. You belong to me now, Ina; only I'm afraid if Mr. Fortescue is obdurate I cannot claim you for two years."

"My father does not love me," said Ina, slowly. "So surely he would be glad to be free of me?"

"Can you remember him?"

"Not in the least. I recollect my old nurse—who brought me here—perfectly; but I have no remembrance of my father."

"And he has never been to see you all the years you have lived at Ravenstoke?"

"Never once."

"Can it be possible you know no more of him than that he is rich enough to provide liberally for your maintenance?"

Ina hesitated.

"Mrs. Cameron wrote to him every year. I wrote, too, once, but he never took any notice. Once the banker sent the cheque by a clerk, instead of by post. The old gentleman—he had white hair—said he was instructed to see me, and ask if there was anything I wished for. I told him I wanted to see my father, and he said then my father was abroad, that he hardly ever came to England. I asked if he worked very hard, and could never have a little holiday. The old man smiled as though I had made a joke, and declared life was pretty well all holiday for my father. I need never trouble about him working hard. There was no need for him to, since he had plenty of money without earning a penny."

"Then he is well!"

"I suppose so. I have often wanted to see him, and yet I should be terrified at the thought."

"Why?"

"I don't know."

But Mr. Douglas pressed the question.

"I think," said Ina simply, "he hates me."

"My dearest! Why?"

"In all these years he has never sent me a word of kindness, never made a single inquiry after me. Oh, I grant," as she saw her lover about to interrupt her; "that he has provided for me; but if he is so rich money could be no object. He got rid of all his parental responsibilities by a stroke of his pen once a quarter."

"But, Ina, you have probably been much happier and far better cared for with my cousin than if you had led an aimless, wandering life with Mr. Fortescue all these fifteen years!"

"Oh! Mrs. Cameron has been as good to me as if I had been her own child, and I love her dearly; but Randolph, my father had no proof of this! Don't you see she might have been a cruel, heartless, unprincipled woman! If she had, and had ill-treated me systematically all these years, my father would never have found it out!"

She was right. Mr. Fortescue's plan had been to get rid of his daughter until he wanted her; he had shown not the slightest anxiety how she fared in the meanwhile.

"Dear," said her lover, simply, "you have led a lonely life hitherto, but sunshine is coming for you now; my neglected little love shall be the happiest wife in England."

A servant came to call them in to tea. Randolph led Ina up the garden-path, through the French windows, to where Mrs. Cameron sat behind her pretty malon-shaped silver teapot.

"Cousin Mary," said the young man, gaily, "you may leave me to answer Mr. Fortescue's letter, for I have won my darling, and I will not be robbed of her by all the fathers in the world."

Mary Cameron kissed the girl she loved as her own with all a mother's tenderness.

"My dear," she said, gently, "I hope you will be happy, and I feel I can trust you with Randolph. He is a Douglas, and they always had hearts of gold; but how I shall look at your father I can't think."

But her engagement, though only half-an-hour old, seemed to have given Ina Fortescue courage.

"You know," she observed, quietly, "if my father wanted to decide my future he should have come to see me. He has never taken any

interest in me; what can it matter to him whether I am happy or not?"

Here poor Mrs. Cameron recollected the other side of the question, and the forcible objections of Sir Ralph Douglas, Baronet.

"O, dear! Randolph, there's your father, too, and I had quite forgotten all about him."

"I will write to him to-night, and, Cousin Mary, can you give me Mr. Fortescue's address?"

"No, I always write to his bankers, Messrs. Melville, in the City. I expect they know it."

"I will call and inquire to-morrow. Hark! Who can that be, so late as this?"

Ravenstoke was a primitive place, and even on a June evening eight o'clock was not thought correct for visits; besides, a carriage stood outside the gate of Violet Cottage, and the knock at the front door had been, as Mrs. Cameron said, afterwards, loud enough to wake the dead.

Ina and her lover sat next each other, so it was natural that in her alarm her little hand should glide into his.

Mrs. Cameron went on mechanically pouring out the tea; but her fingers shook with a nervous fear.

Enter the servant.

"A gentleman on business, ma'am. He is in the drawing-room. He would not give me his name, but said he was sure you would remember him."

Randolph offered to go in his cousin's stead, but this she would not permit.

"I daresay it is only a man with a subscription list," said the poor lady, bravely. "They always make out they have come on important business till you actually are in the room."

But the widow felt uneasy. She did not know what she expected, still less what she feared. She turned the handle of the drawing-room door with a jerk, and went in, to see a tall, military man pacing up and down the little room like some wild beast confined in a cage all too small for his restless energy.

"Mrs. Cameron!" he exclaimed. "I should have known you anywhere. The fifteen years which have passed since our last meeting have left no mark on you. I fear I am more changed. Wandering from one place to another tells on a man."

He was changed, but she knew him the moment she saw his eyes. The black hair was still unaltered. There were one or two lines about the mouth, and the expression, once simply cold and stern, had now something of sarcastic cynicism about it. But still he looked wonderfully young to have a daughter contemplating matrimony; and, in spite of her sympathy with the young lovers, Mrs. Cameron felt a little grateful to her visitor when she remembered that for fifteen years he had sent her the by no means trifling sum of five hundred pounds.

"Mr. Fortescue! Is it possible?"

"Quite possible that I am here. Did you not expect me so soon? But, my dear lady, I am not Mr. Fortescue. Within a day or so of our last meeting I succeeded my brother in the title. It seemed idle pride to ask you to change the inscription on your letters. Besides, I fancied, for my child's sake, I had better keep the matter secret for a while. But I have been Lord Fortescue of Ardleigh Hall these fifteen years!"

Lord Fortescue! She was not a toady. She came herself of good family; witness her cousin Sir Ralph. But yet it was pleasant news to find her visitor was an English peer. Mrs. Cameron was but human; to have a nobleman visiting her in this unceremonious manner was passing sweet.

"Lord Fortescue! And to think I never guessed it. Than my pretty Ina, perhaps, has a title too!"

He shook his head.

"She is the Honourable Ina Fortescue; but there is no other title awaiting her. And now, Mrs. Cameron, may I ask for an account of your charge? You will confess I have not fettered you with many demands or inquisitorial visits. I laid down but three conditions for your guidance. I trust they have been observed."

"You have been kindness itself, my lord; and I love your daughter dearly. I remember the

conditions perfectly; and I can say truly Miss Fortescue has never slept a night away from Ravenstoke, nor accepted any invitation without my accompanying her since she came here."

"Excellent!" said the peer, gravely. "But there were three conditions. Has the last been carried out? Have you taught Ina she was destined to lead a life apart, and must not expect gaiety and amusement?"

Mrs. Cameron's conscience smote her when she thought of in whose company she had left Ina.

"I tried to," she said, frankly; "but sweet-tempered as she is, your daughter possesses a firm will. As a child she used to remonstrate, and say, surely if she never asked you for amusements, but earned them for herself, surely she could have them. As she grew up she often spoke of earning her own living."

"Heaven forbid!"

"I always scorned the idea," declared Mrs. Cameron. "My lord, I will tell you frankly what I regard as the one flaw in your child's character. I have done my utmost to make her feel grateful for the liberal education and comfortable home you have provided for her; but I failed entirely to make her appreciate the matter aright. Gentle and yielding in general, Ina yet has no dutiful respect for you. It is not my fault. But she has chosen to resent what she terms your long neglect of her, and I fear at first you will not find her the docile, affectionate daughter you may expect."

"I expect nothing but that from her," said Lord Fortescue, sadly. "She was born the child of sorrow, and until she is in her grave I shall hope for no comfort concerning her. Perhaps, dear madame, it was not fair to impose such a charge on you without giving you my fullest confidence, but, for the child's sake, I was anxious you should be entirely unprejudiced. You may have thought me harsh and unfatherly in my conduct to Ina in the rules I laid down for your guidance respecting her. You may have taken offence even at my letter, since I believe the young gentleman to whose intimacy with my child I objected is a relation of your own."

"A very distant cousin," admitted the widow, "the son and heir of Sir Ralph Douglas. My lord, indeed he is a husband any girl might be proud of, and he simply worships Ina!"

"Poor fellow! Poor fellow!"

"You will not part them!" pleaded Mrs. Cameron. "Indeed, my lord, I had no thought of betraying your confidence. Randolph is nearly thirty, and I looked on Ina as a child; and though you are an English peer I do think Sir Ralph's heir an alliance not unequal for your child!"

"My dear lady," said the peer, with unctious, a suspicious dimness in his eyes, "I am the last man in the world to be ambitious. I know the Douglas family well, and but for one mournful circumstance would gladly welcome Mr. Randolph as a son-in-law; but I should be playing an unworthy part if, with my miserable secret, I suffered the match to go on!"

"Nothing will change his love!" declared Mrs. Cameron. "Even if she were not Miss Fortescue he would be true to her!"

"Not Miss Fortescue! What do you mean?"

"Forgive me, but I knew there was a mystery, and I have fancied sometimes there might have been—by an accident—some flaw in the legality of your marriage. I mean," she reddened with confusion, "that though your daughter, Ina was not your heiress!"

"I understand. I daresay the suspicion was natural, but it was unfounded. I was married with every legal precaution, and Ina is Miss Fortescue of Ardleigh. If anything happened to my boy she would be my heiress!"

"Your boy! I never dreamed Ina had a brother!"

"A half-brother," corrected Lord Fortescue. "I married again three years ago, chiefly that my title might not pass to my poor afflicted Ina—a girl who must never be wife or mother!"

"But why?" persisted Mrs. Cameron. "My lord, I may be stupid, but I cannot understand."

"I will speak plainly then, painful as it may be. My first wife had been some time confined

in a lunatic asylum. She quitted it the last time only three months before her child's birth. For generations the disease has been in her family, and the first physicians in mental disorders have assured me Ina has the fatal taint in her blood. Sooner or later she will be a raving maniac!"

CHAPTER II.

LOVERS never complain of the length of time they are left *à-tête*, or it might have occurred to Randolph and Ina that Mrs. Cameron's mysterious visitor was detaining her unconsciously. When at last she came back to them, both were horrified by the aspect of her face.

She looked like someone who has received a terrible shock. Her smile had fled, and there was an expression of troubled sympathy on her face.

"My dear," she spoke to Ina, but she carefully avoided meeting the girl's eyes, "your father is waiting to see you."

"My father!" Ina blushed crimson with excitement at the news. "Is he really come at last?"

"He is in the drawing-room. My dear, do not keep him waiting; you had better go at once."

But Mr. Douglas interposed.

"We will both go to him," he answered, gravely, taking Ina's little hand in his. "There can be no desire for a private interview between a father and child who have been parted for fifteen years. It is better that Mr. Fortescue should understand that Ina has promised herself to me."

"I have told him, Randolph," said poor Mrs. Cameron; "and he has convinced me that it can never be. Oh, what have I said! My poor children! My darling Ina! But indeed you must forget each other. Lord Fortescue will not hear of your engagement!"

"Lord Fortescue of Ardleigh!" exclaimed Randolph. "Do you mean that he is Ina's father?"

"Yes."

A curious smile crossed the young man's face, but he said nothing, only held Ina's hand more closely, and opening the door left Mrs. Cameron to her own reflections.

They were not pleasant ones. Good, kind-hearted woman that she was, Mary Cameron reproached herself bitterly for not having guessed the terrible certainty which threatened her charge.

Lord Fortescue had warned her so plainly his daughter was not as other girls, and yet she had suffered her to drift into an attachment which bid fair to blight two lives.

"He can never marry her," thought the widow, sadly. "And the Douglases are faithful until death. He will go down to his grave unmarried, and his grand old name will be extinct."

Lord Fortescue was standing facing the door when the young couple entered.

Any father might have been proud of the fair graceful girl who clung so timidly to her lover's arm. Any man might have been glad to welcome such a son-in-law as Randolph Douglas. But the expression on the peer's face had nothing of pleasure in it.

"I wished to see Miss Fortescue alone," he said, coldly to Mr. Douglas. "I do not understand your intrusion."

"I have business with your lordship I would rather not defer," said Randolph, proudly. "I love your daughter; and I have her promise to be my wife. Since you have neglected her utterly from infancy, I deny that you have any moral claim to decide her future, but I am well aware the law requires your sanction to our union until she is of age. I am here, Lord Fortescue, to ask you for your daughter. My name and position are well known to you, since my father's estate and Ardleigh join; in years gone by we and the last Fortescues were sworn friends and comrades. I little dreamed when I met Ina that she was the niece of one my father regarded as a brother."

"I thank you for the honour you offer my child," said Lord Fortescue warmly; "but I beg unhesitatingly to decline your proposal. I shall never consent to your marrying my daughter."

"You overrate your power," returned Randolph, coldly. "For two years, I grant, it rests with you to part us; but when once she is of age not all the fathers in the world can prevent Ina from becoming my wife!"

Lord Fortescue smiled sadly as though he would not be angry, however much provoked. He turned to Ina,—

"Your admirable guardian has given orders for your things to be packed at once. I propose to leave for London by the last train. It starts in an hour's time. If you have any last preparations to make you had better attend to them at once."

She looked at her lover. He understood the mute appeal, and took her hand lovingly in his own.

"It is only for a little time, my darling. If only you will be true to me this miserable separation will soon pass, and I can claim you before all the world."

"You will write to me?" pleaded Ina.

"If he does," observed Lord Fortescue, "I shall make it my business to see you do not receive his letters. Do you think I am going to be defied by my own child, rebellious girl!"

Her eyes flashed. She had plenty of spirit, in spite of her gentle nature.

"I owe you no respect—no obedience! What have you ever done for me all these years! What claim have you on me!"

"You talk folly," said Fortescue, roughly. "Go to Mrs. Cameron. She will teach you your duty."

The two men were left alone.

It was a strange position. Equals in point of family, their homes actually adjoining, it was yet their first actual meeting.

Fortescue looked younger than his age, and might have been taken anywhere under forty.

Randolph, on the contrary, seemed older than his years, and so you would have taken the two more for rivals in love than a passionate suitor and the stern father of his choice.

"My lord," said Randolph, stiffly, "I await your explanation. You owe it to me to state your objections."

"And if I refuse?"

"For your own credit's sake, you will hardly do so. The whole world knows my position and prospects. In pecuniary considerations I am a fair match for your daughter. There has always been a friendly intimacy between our families, and I defy you to point out any blot on my past life that justifies you in refusing me Ina."

"I don't refuse her to you personally," said Fortescue, hurriedly. "Were you a duke my answer would be the same. I do not intend the girl to marry."

"This is nonsense."

"Ask Mrs. Cameron," suggested Lord Fortescue. "I have given her my motives, and she approves them."

"Impossible."

The peer shrugged his shoulders.

"Ask her. I can say no more. It is my belief when you have listened to your worthy cousin you will be completely of my opinion regarding Ina."

"Will you answer me one question, Lord Fortescue? Are you sending me away on the chance of a nobler son-in-law?"

"On my word, no! My one desire for Ina, and has been for years, is that she should never marry!"

The door opened and Ina entered, dressed in a travelling costume of soft grey; a velvet hat of the same shade rested on her fair hair; her eyes were red with crying, and Mrs. Cameron, who came with her, had much ado to restrain her sobs.

"I shall miss her so terribly," said the widow, sadly. "You see she has been like my own child these fifteen years."

"Don't cry," whispered Ina. "I shall come back to you, dear. I shall not stay with Lord Fortescue a day after I am my own mistress!"

"Then how do you propose to support your-

self, young lady!" demanded her father, sharply; but Ina did not shrink even from that question. The timid girl seemed changed into a heroine.

"I have been carefully educated," she said, gravely, "and I imagine others will be glad to learn from me. I should not mind how hard I worked so that I was free."

"You will never need to work at all," said Randolph, lovingly. "The day the law makes you your own mistress we will be married."

She gave him one grateful glance from under her long eyelashes; then she looked sadly round the little room where she had spent so many happy years.

"I shall never forget it," she said to Mrs. Cameron, "nor all your goodness to me. As long as I live I shall remember dear Violet Cottage, and my happy childhood, and some day I will come back."

She was gone. It had all happened so quickly. Events had followed each other so rapidly, from Sir Ralph's letter of vexation to Lord Fortescue's abrupt appearance and terrible revelation, that poor Mrs. Cameron was quite overcome. She sank back in a low chair, and looked ready to faint.

Randolph was as kind to her as possible. He ordered a cup of hot tea, and stood over her while she drank it. He waited till she had grown calmer and more like herself, and then he said gently enough, but in the tone of one who means to be answered,—

"Lord Fortescue referred me to you for an explanation. He said you knew the motives of his conduct about Ina, and approved them!"

"I don't," said Mrs. Cameron, frankly. "I mean I don't approve them. He ought to have told me the truth fifteen years ago—not now, when it is too late."

"Still you will tell it to me!" urged Rae.

"My dear, I can't bear to! It has well-nigh curdled the blood in my veins, for I loved her as my own child, and it will break your heart."

"I think not!" said Rae, simply. "While Ina is well, and while she loves me, nothing else really matters!"

Mrs. Cameron sobbed out the story, bit by bit, and Randolph listened, to her amazement, with a set, impenetrable face.

"I don't believe it!" he said at last.

"Randolph!"

"It is too full and too minute to be true," said Mr. Douglas, slowly. "If that man had been telling you simple facts he would have contented himself with saying his wife died insane, and that there was a chance of Ina inheriting her malady. I fancy, Cousin Mary, had he said this much and no more I might have believed him!"

"But—"

"But he has overdone it," retorted Randolph, "by saying his wife was some time in an asylum, and that for generations and generations insanity had been in the family; also by declaring the first doctors of the day had declared Ina inherited the fatal disease. You know no doctors have seen her since she came to you. You have the old nurse's word that she had the sole charge of Ina from the time she was six months old! Surely this convicts the father of falsehood! He declares he consulted the first specialists of the day, and they declared that Ina must infallibly go mad! Now, Cousin Mary, I don't believe physicians would pronounce such a doom on any creature they had never seen. It is out of the question they would give such a verdict on an infant in arms; and, as we know, since she was six months old Ina has never been shown to any distinguished practitioner. I think we can laugh at her father's fiction!"

Mrs. Cameron was very far from laughing.

"Such things are hereditary, Ran."

"I know; but as he has lied in one particular he may in another."

"But what could be his object?"

"I don't know," said Randolph, slowly, "but I mean to find out. I shall go home to-morrow and cross-question Sir Ralph."

"He will be as anxious to separate you as Lord Fortescue himself!"

"I think not."

"Remember his letter."

"He did not know that Ina was so dear to me then, nor had he heard her birth. Sir Ralph is a proud man; but even he would be content that I should marry Miss Fortescue of Ardleigh. Strange I never dreamed, when we discussed Ina's story, that she could belong to that family."

"Does your father know Lord Fortescue?"

"Not this man, but he and the last lord were like brothers. The Fortescues have rather a strange history. There were three brothers—this man is the youngest—and for years no one thought they would ever marry. Lord Fortescue died fifteen years ago; his second brother had been killed a few years before in an accident; so Ina's father came into everything, and for ages it was a marvel to people generally that he did not marry."

"But he had married!" objected Mrs. Cameron.

"He was a widower when he came into the property. You forget that."

"He never owned it. It is only three years since his marriage was announced to an Italian actress. They have one child—a boy—but they never come near Ardleigh. My father was enraged when he heard of the match, and said it was the first rebellion in the Fortescue family."

Mrs. Cameron looked bewildered.

"Then who was Ina's mother?"

Mr. Douglas shook his head.

"I have no idea; but I am almost certain the marriage must have been kept secret. Now, in such a case, he could not have known much of his wife's history. To say madness was in the family for untold generations must be false."

"I can't understand," said poor Mrs. Cameron, quite bewildered. "Lord Fortescue has spent enormous sums on Ina, and provided for her exactly as though she was his daughter, and now you seem to imply she is not."

"You wrong me. I have no hope of proving she is not his child, only there is a mystery somewhere. Why should he want to keep her unmarried? Why should he invent (I feel sure it is an invention) such a cruel libel about her mother? What has he to gain? Depend upon it there is something heavy at stake!"

Mrs. Cameron shook her head.

"On the contrary, he would gain if she married you. Her wants would never cost him another shilling, and would not interfere with his second family." Then, after a pause, "No, Randolph, it is terribly sad, and I can't bear to think of it; but I fear the story is true, and that fearful doom really threatens our poor Ina."

"I have no patience with you!" cried Randolph. "Did she ever show a sign of it? Did you ever meet a quieter, calmer creature? Did you ever before associate clear, serene grey eyes with maids? Was her conduct to-night, under a sudden and overwhelming shock, what you would expect from a mad woman?"

"No. But—"

"Never mind the but. Be your own kind self, Cousin Mary, and don't believe evil of the girl you have reared, for all the fathers in the world. You will see Ina Mrs. Douglas yet!"

But, in spite of the young man's anxiety, he could sympathise with the widow's disappointment.

He knew that with Ina she had lost her income, and he asked her, quite kindly and thoughtfully, what she intended to do.

Mrs. Cameron replied she had expected Ina's recall for a long time, and had been saving to provide for the calamity.

Violet Cottage and its furniture were her own—all that her husband had been able to leave her. She had carefully put by a quarter of her income ever since Ina came to her.

This safely invested in railway stock produced over a hundred a-year; so, though it would be in a far humbler style than she had of late been used to, she hoped to be able to continue in her present house.

"I should like to stay at the Cottage," she said, when Ran pressed her to come to his father's, at any rate, on a long visit. "You and I don't think alike about Lord Fortescue, Ran; but

both love Ina, and for her sake I would rather stay here."

"For Ina's sake!" repeated Mr. Douglas.

"Why?"

"I don't think she will be happy with her father," said Mrs. Cameron, slowly. "And, gentle as she seems, she has a very strong will. I know she loves me, and I believe, Randolph, if anything drove her to leave her father, she would come straight back to me."

"Do you think he would be unkind to her?"

The widow hesitated.

"I never did believe in stepmothers, Randolph. The new wife may be quite a girl herself, and grudge Ina her place in the home. Besides, no doubt Lord Fortescue is wrapped up in his second family, and Ina is sensitive. After being my first object all these years, it would come hard on the child to feel she was one too many."

"I wish she would come back," said Rin, gravely. "Cousin Mary, I know you won't like to hear it, but I think I hate Lord Fortescue. He looked to me a man capable of any evil!"

Mr. Douglas was home in time for dinner the next day. His father greeted him warmly, but asked no questions. It was only when the cloth was removed, and the servants had left the two alone over their dessert that Sir Ralph said gravely,—

"You are home very suddenly, my boy!"

"I came to ask your help, Mr.," said Randolph, frankly. "I want to be married, and everything seems against me."

"Not to your cousin's adopted child?"

"To Lord Fortescue's only daughter, who has been under Mary's charge for years."

Sir Ralph looked disturbed.

"I always thought he married that girl. He denied it hard and fast at the time though."

"Who?"

"She was an officer's daughter of good family, but poor enough to have to earn her own bread twenty years ago. She was governess at the Rectory, and she suddenly disappeared. It was an open secret that Lord Fortescue—my old friend and comrade—had proposed to her and been refused. Mrs. Allen, the rector's wife, called him into her counsel; he spent money like water in the search, but no clue was ever found. Your mother had loved the girl dearly, though she had only known her a few months, and positively refused to believe evil of her; but the mystery was never solved. Poor Fortescue himself taxed Noel with it. He was a handsome fellow, and had been intimate with the Allens, but he declared he was far too poor to marry anyone but an heiress."

"And you think she was the present lord's first wife, and the mother of my Ina?"

Sir Ralph nodded his head.

"Margaret Trevor was a beautiful girl, and, I believe, a good one. She left the Rectory with her lover, and I for one shall never believe she was not his wife. I suspected Noel Fortescue at the time. When he came into the title, and yet kept single all these years I felt certain of it."

Randolph told his story. He kept back nothing. He poured out his wrongs, his Ina's charms, and Lord Fortescue's cruelty. Sir Ralph looked bewildered.

"I can't make it out. I never liked Noel Fortescue. There was something underhand about him, but I don't see why he should hate his own child enough to invent such cruel lies about her. I begin to fear, my boy, we are mistaken, and he married someone who was really insane."

"Miss Trevor was not so, you are sure of that?"

The Baronet almost smiled.

"She was the only child of a brave officer whose family were famous for their courage. Besides, her whole life could be accounted for. From eight to eighteen she was at a school for officers' daughters; she came straight from there to be Mrs. Allen's governess."

"And when did she leave?"

"In the summer of 'sixty-four.' June, I think."

"And Ina was born in April of 'sixty-five.'"

Sir Ralph looked troubled.

"I can't see the motive, Randolph. I don't want to take Fortescue's part, but men don't sin like that without a motive. If he married Margaret Trevor there is no reason for his wanting to bring such an awful charge against her memory. The Fortescue estates are so strictly entailed that everything must go to his son. It would be far more to his advantage to see the girl well married, than have to save a scanty provision for her."

"Can you describe Miss Trevor?"

"I never was good at describing people, but if you go to the Rectory, Mrs. Allen has a picture of her. One of their friends was fond of drawing and he painted Margaret as a present to his hostess. It does not do her justice, but it will show you the style of woman that she was—the very least likely to go out of her mind."

"And then? I mean when I have satisfied myself—as I feel sure I shall—that Miss Trevor became Fortescue's wife and Ina's mother, what am I to do next?"

"You can do nothing until she is of age."

"I must!" said Ran, breathlessly. "Sir, do you think if I knew he had forged such a cruel charge, I can be content to leave my darling in his keeping? He must have some powerful object to gain by making people believe her mad."

"He can't have!" declared Sir Ralph. "I tell you he came into immense wealth on his brother's death. My poor old friend left everything to go with the title, believing his favourite brother Garnet would succeed him—as brave a soldier as ever donned a uniform. Garnet unhappily had died a few years before, and Fortescue always forgot to alter his will. Why, the funded property alone must have been immense. Even if through her mother (though Margaret Trevor had no rich relations) his daughter had come into a fortune, to keep it in his hands could be no inducement to him. Why, the man is a millionaire."

"Have you ever seen Lady Fortescue?"

"I called," said Sir Ralph, slowly. "I felt bound to do that much. She is a lovely creature but quite beneath him in rank. I should imagine her to have been about the class of a ballet dancer before he married her. As to an actress, that's nonsense! She hasn't the education. She may have walked on the stage to make up a crowd, but acted, never! She's not got the brains!"

"I suppose he is very fond of her!"

"Worships her, apparently, but it's an awful come down for the Fortescues. She'll never be able to hold her own in the country."

"Do you think she will be kind to Ina?"

"I should not like to say. She looked to me to have a temper, but she's devoted to her own child. They were only there a week, and then went on to Eilerside, a new place he's bought in Yorkshire."

Mr. Douglas paid his visit at the Rectory, and took the sweet, silver-haired mistress of the ivy-covered house into his confidence. Mrs. Allen had never forgotten the sweet-faced girl who, for a few months, had been like an elder daughter to her.

Randolph at first gave no explanation, only said he much wished to see Miss Trevor's picture, as in his travels he believed he had met with her child.

Mrs. Allen produced the painting, a little faded, a little old-fashioned, but still distinct enough for the lover to recognise a speaking likeness to Ina.

"Heaven bless you, dear Mrs. Allen," he said warmly. "You have solved my doubts. It is her very self."

The old lady started.

"Do you really mean Margaret left a daughter and that you have seen her?"

"I mean," said Randolph, smiling, "I have lost my heart to a creature who might have sat for this picture, and when I bring her home you will think you see Miss Trevor again."

"Her name!" cried Mrs. Allen. "Oh, do tell me who she is. I assure you the mystery of Margaret's fate has been a trial to me for years."

"Her name is Ina Fortescue."

Mrs. Allen's face changed.

"Then she is not Margaret's daughter?"

"My father felt sure she was. He said the present Lord Fortescue was a frequent visitor here, and an open admirer of your lovely friend."

"The three brothers visited here and they all admired Margaret. The Captain came very seldom, for he lived mostly with his regiment in London. From the first I saw it only resided with Margaret to be Lady Fortescue. When she refused I asked her reason, and taxed her with preferring handsome Noel to his noble, generous brother. I shall never forget her reply. The tears came down her cheeks as she took my hand and assured me that come what might she would never marry Lord Fortescue. She hated and feared him, she said, too much for that."

"Are you sure she was in earnest?"

"I am positive. Sir Ralph and I always differed about this. He declares Noel Fortescue was the cause of Margaret leaving me. I know the poor child hated him. Why, I have seen her tremble all over at his bare approach. She feared him as an enemy."

It was then Randolph confided his story—his love for Ina, her lonely childhood and neglected youth, the strange return of her father, his point-blank refusal to the marriage, his cruel tale of her mother's insanity.

Mrs. Allen listened spell-bound; but she did not seem in the least converted to Randolph's theory.

"I would believe any evil of Noel Fortescue. It is not exactly the right sentiment for a clergyman's wife, Mr. Douglas; but I think him capable of any crime!"

Randolph sighed.

"He seems to have no love for his child, therefore one would have thought he might have been glad to be free from all care of her; but she has Margaret Trevor's face. I tell you this picture could pass as her likeness, and yet you, who knew the lady well, declare she hated Noel Fortescue, and would never be his wife."

"She never was his wife!" said Mrs. Allen, firmly. "Of that I am quite convinced; but what proof have you that he is your Ina's father?"

Randolph stared.

"He says so. I never thought of doubt!"

"I doubt it very much!" said Mrs. Allen, calmly. "If she is Margaret Trevor's child Lord Fortescue is not her father. On that point you may be certain!"

"But how can I find out whether she is his child?"

"It will be a very weary task," said his friend, gravely, "and will cost a good deal of money. I see nothing for it but to employ a detective to find the certificate of Noel Fortescue's marriage."

"And then?"

"Meanwhile, yourself search out the fate of Margaret Trevor. She left us in June, twenty years ago, so I fear the clue will be hard to find."

"And you never heard from her?"

"Only once. Three months later I had a letter from her, urging me not to think her ungrateful. She was well and happy. Her husband was the noblest man I ever met, and when she could explain their reasons for secrecy she was sure that we should understand and approve of them. You see, Mr. Douglas, that settles the question. She knew I disliked Noel Fortescue—that nothing in the world would make me approve of her marrying him. Then the wording of the note seems to imply I knew her husband. The Rector and I used to go over all the people who had visited here; but we never could hit on one who would have needed to use such secrecy in marrying Margaret."

"You think," said Randolph, slowly, "the certificate of Noel Fortescue's marriage will prove Margaret Trevor was not his wife. How, then, shall I account for her marvellous resemblance to this picture?"

Mrs. Allen smiled anxiously.

"Find the certificate of his marriage first—it probably took place some time in 'sixty-six. When you bring me that I will give you my opinion."

But the stress she laid on the "when" gave Mr.

Douglas the impression she thought he would find the search both long and difficult.

CHAPTER III.

OFTEN and often had Ina pictured her first long journey. Again and again she entreated Mrs. Cameron to write and get her father's permission to take her to London or the seaside.

The girl had eagerly mapped out the scene. The packing up, the delightful bustle and novelty, the charm of waking up in some other apartment than her pretty little dimly-lit room at Violet Cottage, and now the reality had come. She was actually off on her travels, and she would gladly have bargained never to wish to leave Ravenstock if only she could have been back at her dearly-loved home, with her kind, adopted mother.

It seemed like a dream. A dark, foreign-looking man—evidently a valet—met them at the station, and took all trouble off their hands. A compartment had been reserved, and when the train came up Ina was conducted to it.

Her father sat opposite her. Karl, the valet, handed in quite a sheaf of papers, a basket of fruit, a bag of cakes, and other trifles. Another moment, and they were off, the smooth-faced domestic informing his master they were due in London at five o'clock.

The journey passed without much incident, and finally Ina found herself installed in her new home with her foreign stepmother at Eilerelle. No society was kept, and she would have been utterly miserable but for the society of an old nurse, Janet, who had known her mother.

Ina started to her feet when Janet told her this, and seized the woman's hand, and kissed it.

"My mother! my dear, dear mother, whom I have never heard of! Oh, Janet, only tell me something about her, and I will bless you."

"There's little enough to tell, Miss Ina. She was just like you, only—if you won't be offended—brighter and prettier. She was a mere child when she married, and she died at twenty."

Ina looked at the nurse imploringly.

"And my father loved her?"

"Her husband just worshipped her, Miss Ina. He loved the very ground she walked on."

"And yet he hates me!" murmured Ina. "Strange he should have idolized his wife, and yet not have one kind feeling for her child!"

Perhaps Janet thought she had said too much, for she changed the subject abruptly.

"Do you know who's coming to-night, Miss Ina?"

"Lady Fortescue's uncle."

"Yes, the Signor Gabrielli, as they call him. He's a celebrated doctor in his own country. Educated himself, for he was but the son of a peasant, and made himself a name. I didn't mean to like you, Miss Ina; but, somehow, you remind me of your mother, so I can't help giving you one word of warning—beware of Gabrielli."

Ina started.

"But why?"

The nurse shook her head mysteriously.

"I can say no more. Just those few words are enough to lose me my place—beware of Gabrielli."

It seemed very strange, and when Ina was presented to the guest that evening she was even more bewildered.

The Italian doctor was an old man with silvery hair and a long beard, which gave him almost a patriarchal aspect. He spoke English fluently (there were people unkind enough to say he had learned the language by working as a boy in an Italian restaurant in the Strand, where he earned enough to pursue his medical studies). He was undeniably clever, his face told that; but there was a glitter in his dark eyes keen observers did not like; and more than one of his English confidants had declared that, with all his talents and learning, there was one thing Gabrielli could never teach himself—how to be a gentleman.

But to Ina, with her nineteen years,

reverence for old age, and her delight at hearing kind words in her own language, the Signor seemed a very kind, fatherly old man.

Janet must have been mistaken in telling her to beware of him. Why, she almost loved him dearly, and, had he been Lady Fortescue's father, would willingly have given him the affectionate title of grandpapa.

He sat next her at dinner, and talked to her a great deal. When they joined the ladies in the drawing-room he went straight to her side, his niece not seeming at all jealous.

Ina did not understand the warm interest the Signor was pleased to take in her, nor his curiosity as to her life in England. His kindness she fully appreciated, and when she went to bed that night it was with the opinion life at Eilerelle would be much pleasanter during the doctor's visit.

Poor child!

In the smoking-room Lord Fortescue and his uncle by marriage held a long and eager conversation after the rest of the household had retired. The Signor's face was a trifle less amiable than it had been in the drawing-room, and Lord Fortescue's was undeniably angry.

"Ten thousand pounds is an absurd price," he said at last. "I think you presume on our relationship, Signor."

The Italian smiled sardonically.

"But for the relationship I would not stir a finger in the matter. You don't suppose I want to help you. It is Paulina and her boy I think of. Anyway, that is my last word—ten thousand pounds in gold."

"I call it preposterous."

"Then you are at liberty to refuse it."

"You know that I can't do that. I am in a regular fix. I must get you to help me or someone else."

"Who may betray you to the other side?"

"After all," said Fortescue, slowly, "I believe I could defy discovery. Supposing I relented, and enacted the part of amiable father."

"Too late."

"How so?"

"The young man's suspicions are aroused. I had it from a secret agent of my own. Mr. Douglas is now in London seeking a detective clever enough to hunt up the certificate of your marriage with Ina's mother."

"It will need a very clever detective."

The doctor laughed.

"Unquestionably; but that does not lessen the danger to yourself. I tell you plainly, you have made a great mistake. It was a false move altogether, proclaiming yourself to those people as Fortescue of Ardleigh."

"I was so taken by surprise I—"

"Precisely. Well, it's no use to talk over past mistakes. The future is enough to occupy you."

"Rather too much."

"Not at all. It's simple to a degree. Ten thousand down and safely secured or—ruin!"

"You think then—"

"I think with my help," suggested the wily doctor, "Mr. Randolph Douglas will be able to discover something a great deal more useful to him than the certificate he is seeking."

"Surely you would not betray me."

"I must think of Paulina and her boy. I have no children, and my niece is dear to me. If you refuse my conditions I shall go to the other side. Whatever they pay me will go to form a little provision for my injured darlings."

"Gabrielli, I think you are a fiend!"

The doctor smiled.

"I am not a fool, my friend. You have told me your secrets to please yourself; I intend to use them for my own advantage."

"Ten thousand pounds! And you are sure it could be managed."

"I am positive of it. Money down, and no questions asked."

Ten minutes of breathless silence. Lord Fortescue paced the room like some wild beast.

He stopped his frantic walk abruptly in front of the doctor.

"You shall have the money to-morrow. Only, remember, whatever you do I desire to know nothing—nothing at all."

"I shall respect your fatherly scruples. You may leave everything to me in perfect security. And now, my worthy nephew, as I have much to think of and arrange, and as it is getting late, I will wish you good-night."

He was gone.

Lord Fortescue buried his face in his hands and trembled.

He was not a good man. He had already broken his promise to the dead, and cruelly wronged the living; but even he shrank in horror from the step just taken. If those who loved Ina could only have dreamed of the fate in store for her the morning's light would have found them at Eilerelle, no matter at what cost.

CHAPTER IV, AND LAST.

RANDOLPH DOUGLAS went to London on his self-imposed task full of hope and confidence. He knew the exact date of Ina's birth, and had always understood her mother died within a year of her marriage. Thus he knew the year, and well-nigh the month, of the ceremony; and it seemed to him it must be easy to find the certificate, able as he was to offer a tempting reward for it. His father's advice had been short, and to the point.

"Don't appear in it yourself, my boy. I know Noel Fortescue of old, and he's as deep as any man yet born. If you stir in the search he will divine your motive, and do his best to baffle you."

So Mr. Douglas went straight to the family lawyers, backed with a note from Sir Ralph, begging them to recommend him some acute detective to make some important inquiries for a friend.

Mr. Drummond, the head of the firm, who had known Randolph all his life, told him a certain Silas Gee would suit him in all respects, and hoped, in a kindly way, no trouble threatened his friend.

Impelled to confidence, Randolph answered simply that he was engaged to be married, and he desired to trace out his betrothed's parentage on her mother's side.

Dr. Drummond smiled.

"The father's is usually thought more important."

"There is no difficulty there. She is the daughter of Lord Fortescue of Ardleigh, but he objects strongly to her marrying me or anyone else."

Mr. Drummond looked inscrutable.

"A clever man Lord Fortescue."

"Do you know him?"

"Only as far as having had to settle his debts in his younger days by his late brother's orders. I wonder at his objecting to such a suitor as you, Mr. Douglas!"

Randolph told his story. The lawyer listened with great attention and shook his head.

"Gee will find you the certificate if it's to be had, Mr. Douglas. But I doubt the marriage."

Randolph flushed.

"Do you mean Miss Trevor?"

"I saw her once when I was staying with your father," said Mr. Drummond, "and I would not speak a word against her. But I don't believe she ever married Noel Fortescue. Why, sir, she hated him. It was impossible for anyone who saw them together to doubt it. No, Mr. Douglas; Lord Fortescue may have deluded you by declaring his first wife died mad; but depend upon it that wife was not Margaret Trevor."

Mr. Silas Gee called on Randolph, and duly received his instructions. He seemed a shrewd man of business, and declared there was no difficulty in the matter. But still days passed on, and he had nothing to report.

Randolph began to grow crestfallen. Rewards had been offered far and near for the missing certificate; advertisements had been inserted in all the papers for proofs of the marriage of Margaret Trevor, the ceremony taking place some time in sixty five.

But no answer came, and Randolph was beginning to lose hope—when more than a month after his leaving Violet Cottage—he received a peculiar note from Mr. Gee.

"On the count at last. Will be with you to-morrow at five."

The hours of "to-morrow" dragged painfully to Randolph till five o'clock came; then he heard the detective's familiar knock, and was surprised, on saying "Come in," to see enter not only the stout, comfortable form of Mr. Gee himself, but a female figure closely veiled.

"This lady," began the detective, affably, "declines to give me any assistance unless I can assure her why you require the information. She claims to have been at Miss Ina's marriage, and to have closed her eyes."

"I was with her throughout her married life," said the woman, quietly; "and, but for my being taken in by a villain, I should have had the care of her child. I was very fond of Margaret Trevor, though I was only her servant. I've done her child harm enough already, and I don't mean to do her any more. So, young man, unless you tell me plainly why you want information about Miss Trevor's marriage, you'll get none from me."

She paused to take breath.

Randolph looked at her closely.

A more unprepossessing person it would have been hard to find, but she bore his scrutiny unmoved.

"I want to discover the certificate of Miss Trevor's marriage, because I believe she was the mother of my future wife."

"I think you're mistaken," said the woman, coolly. "She had only one daughter, and from all I hear, poor girl!—she won't have a chance of marrying anyone."

"Are you alluding to Ina Fortescue?"

"And if I am?"

"She is my betrothed wife. Lord Fortescue has just separated us for a time. So soon as she is of age we shall be married."

The woman looked at him keenly.

"My lord refused his consent, didn't he?"

"Yes."

"On what plea?"

"That her mother died insane."

The woman uttered a cry of horror.

"I knew he was a villain," she said, bitterly.

"He would injure the living cruelly to gain his ends; but I never thought he would tell cruel lies of the dead. Well, he should have trusted me entirely, and then maybe I'd have been true to him. I shall not give you the certificate to-night, young man. I've a copy of it at home which I got years ago in case such a thing were needed. I'll give you a piece of advice instead. Leave off troubling about Ina Fortescue's mother, and think of her."

"You are speaking wildly," cried Randolph. "Heaven knows I think of her day and night; but what power have I to remove her from her father's care?"

"She is not with her father."

Mr. Douglas started.

"Where is she?"

"Dead, perhaps," said the woman, slowly. "It is nearly three weeks since she was taken away from Eilersia."

White as death had grown the young lover's face.

"As 'you are a woman, be merciful,' he pleaded. 'Think of what she is to me!'"

"If you care for her take my advice. Don't trouble yourself about certificates; find your fiancée and marry her!"

Randolph turned to the speaker with imploring eyes.

"Where is she?"

"How do I know? I tried to warn her, but she was such a child she would not see."

"For Heaven's sake speak plainly!"

"It is libel if it's overheard," she said, slowly.

"But you look true, and I'll trust you. Ina Fortescue's life stood between a bad man and vast wealth. He had not struck at much. Do you think he would let a slip of a girl keep him out of a noble property? Not he, I can tell you!"

Randolph's blood ran cold.

"You think she is in danger?"

The woman shrugged her shoulders.

"Have you ever heard of the Signor Gabrielli, an Italian doctor?"

Douglas shook his head, but Gee's face brightened.

"Private asylum near Naples," he said, intelligently. "Man of great abilities. Has a wonderful knack of relieving families of encumbrances. No questions asked. Profound secrecy, and a living death behind the stone walls of his asylum. That's his plan. Why, sir," and he turned to Douglas, "if anyone has an interest in getting rid of your young lady she should never have been allowed within an arm's length of Gabrielli."

"He is a bachelor," said Douglas's strange visitor; "and after his profession he cares more for his niece than anything on earth. That niece is Lord Fortescue's wife."

Randolph shuddered.

"What am I to do?"

The detective was ready with his answer.

"We'd better leave the search here and go to Italy; but it's a forlorn hope. Gabrielli has a deal of influence, and has accumulated an immense fortune. He's almost as powerful as the law itself in the little village where he lives."

"You find her," said the woman, in a more feeling tone than she had yet spoken, "and claim her as an English subject! That's your course if you go openly to work, but I tell you it's dangerous."

Silas Gee shook his head.

"That won't do. You say Lord Fortescue stands to gain a great deal by his daughter's death! It sounds incredible, but I suppose you mean it!"

"He will gain safety, wealth and honour."

"Then," said Gee, slowly, "it will never do to alarm Gabrielli. There are so many ways in which he might procure freedom for his nephew by marriage. No, Mr. Douglas, we must have recourse to one or two things—bribery or stealth."

"Only let us say out!" cried Randolph, with feverish anxiety. "My good woman, you must let me reward you. You have done better for us than if you had brought the certificate!"

The nurse Janet—for she it was—shook her head.

"When you have found Ina Fortescue and married her, send for me. I will give you the certificate then, and take any reward you offer me, but I won't touch money till I know she is safe. I have wronged her badly enough, but I never dreamed her life would be in danger."

Mr. Gee had been a good deal abroad in the course of his professional career, and as an artist Randolph had paid several visits to Italy. He spoke the language well, so that the two strangely-assorted companions were spared many of the inconveniences that often assail Englishmen travelling in foreign lands.

The detective was urgent upon one point. They must both adopt a disguise before they started.

"Bless you, sir, Silas Gee's too well known not to be identified, even in Italy, and you yourself. Depend upon it, if her pa's really entrusted your young lady to Signor Gabrielli, he's given a pretty correct description of you, and told him to beware of you."

The result of this was that the two gentlemen who soon after their conversation reached Naples bore little resemblance to the pair who listened to Janet's strange tidings. The travellers were apparently father and son; the former with white hair and beard, bent form, and feeble style, seemingly a little deficient in intellect; the latter, a dashing young officer, dark enough for a Spaniard, with very fine black beard and moustache—a distinguished individual, who looked down on his infirm old parent.

They put up at the first hotel in Naples, and gave their names as the Senors Alvarez, hailing from Madrid. The two accidentally got into conversation with a doctor staying at the hotel and inquired from him particulars of Gabrielli's noted institution. The doctor lauded it to the skies as the most suitable retreat for all afflicted persons—from the helpless imbecile or creature whose mind was enfeebled by old age, to the most violent maniac. He obligingly gave the Spaniards one of his own cards, and declared that Senor

Alvarez would receive every consideration from his distinguished friend Gabrielli.

It would have astonished him not a little could he have heard the conversation between the two strangers that night.

"I shall ask to see the patients," said Douglas, sadly, "but what good will it do? Even if she is there, how can I rescue her, when we have that woman's fearful warning to bear in mind—that to alarm Gabrielli might be to endanger my darling's life?"

Silas Gee took the matter much more hopefully.

"Cheer up, sir," he said, quietly. "Faint hearts never won fair lady. You've got what unlocks most doors—wealth; don't tell me that in all this Gabrielli's establishment there's not some person who's to be bribed! Once you feel sure the young lady's there, the rest's easy."

"I wish I thought so."

"If worst comes to worst," said Gee, equably, "you can immure me as a patient. I shall charge you a little extra, but that you won't object to. Then once within the walls I shall learn all the secrets; and it will go hard with me if I can't release Miss Fortescue!"

Douglas shuddered.

"I don't know what I hope or fear. It will be terrible to find her there, yet if she is not at Gabrielli's she may be at some other place of the same kind to which we have no clue. My Ina, my fair-haired child, confined among lunatics—it is too awful!"

It was not six weeks since he parted from his darling, but the long suspense, and the terrible fears excited by Janet's suggestions, made it seem like years to poor Randolph; and he was far from sharing the cheerful mood with which Mr. Silas Gee prepared for the long drive to the celebrated asylum.

It was an ideal spot.

The house, enclosed in large grounds, stood among vineyards and olive groves. The scenery around was perfect, but the iron gates, the high walls, told plainly that it was a prison.

The doctor was at home, and the gentlemen were ushered into a large, lofty apartment to wait for him.

Randolph went to the window, which, Italian fashion, opened on to a terrace.

Looking out, he saw some of the patients wandering in the grounds.

His heart-beats quickened, for among those and prisoners he recognised his darling; but, oh! how changed from the Ina who had been the sunshine of Violet Cottage.

Weeks of bodily sickness would not have given her that hopeless, dejected air. She seemed to him fading away just for the want of hope.

He longed to rush to her, and clasp her in his arms.

He had almost started in pursuit, when Silas Gee pulled him abruptly back into the room, for the great doctor had entered.

If Gabrielli looked benevolent abroad, he had an even more benign aspect at home.

It was difficult to credit Janet's hints of his character in sight of his fatherly smile.

Douglas opened the conversation in Italian; then, finding the doctor was an able linguist, begged to continue it in English, lest his father would gather its purport, and take alarm. He said, briefly, the old gentleman was just eccentric enough to be a trouble, and he should be glad to have him safely housed.

Then came a haggling about terms, the Signor demanding just double the lowest sum he meant to take, and having to come down gradually.

Then the affectionate son desired a day or two to think over matters, and asked to see the establishment and the officials, and to learn the general routine and rules.

Gabrielli was all urbanity. His keepers were of excellent character, he declared, and noted for their even temper and conciliatory bearing towards their afflicted charges.

They were mostly Italians. There was only one Englishwoman, and she was under notice to leave. It was entirely her own doing. She suited him admirably; but the monotony of the place tried her spirits. She had been there but a short time—only six months. She was an

immense favourite with the patients, but no increase of salary would persuade her to stay.

"Mr. Temple is a lady!" volunteered Gabrielli, "which most of my female attendants are not. She was in abject poverty, and the large salary I offered tempted her. I believe now her husband has obtained a good appointment at home, and can support her in comfort. I shall be sorry to lose her, but I can understand her wish to go."

She was presented to the Spanish gentleman in due form—a patient, sweet-faced woman of five or six-and-twenty, with a quiet air of command, yet strangely gentle in voice and gesture.

She stood at Ina Fortescue's side, and Douglas, with a voice he strove to render calm, asked in Italian the particulars of that young lady's case. The Signor shook his head.

"A sad story. An English girl of rank and fortune. Care quite hopeless. Her delusion is that she had a lover, from whom she was separated against her wish."

Poor Randolph's heart yearned towards her. She never raised her eyes as he passed. Oh! how it hurt him that he was forced to leave her there!

"Well!"

The two conspirators were alone at their hotel, the door of their sitting-room locked for precaution sake.

Douglas spoke impatiently.

"It will do," said Gee, slowly. "That woman, Mrs. Temple, suspects something; I saw it in her face. She may be leaving for the reason the Signor alleges, but she knows some of the secrets of the prison-house, and the knowledge tortures her. Write to her."

"But what shall I say!"

Gee had no mean intelligence. He took up a pen, and dashed off a few lines.—
"The lover whose *fiancée* is detained in Signor Gabrielli's keeping that others may possess her fortune implores Mrs. Temple to allow him a chance of speaking to her alone. If she has any pity for a fellow-countryman in great distress, she will make an appointment. Secrecy and respect guaranteed."

"The patients' correspondence at Signor Gabrielli's might be under strict surveillance, but evidently no embargo was laid on that of the attendants, for by return of post "Señor Alvarez" received the following note,—

"If you are indeed English I will meet you. I dine with an English clergyman, Mr. Melville, on Sunday. Call there at three, and I will see you. Anyone will tell you his house."

"Melville!" and Randolph started. "Why, we were at college together. What could have brought him here!"

He called that very day. It was, indeed, his old college friend, who was spending some time in Italy on account of his wife's health. He received Randolph warmly, and listened eagerly to his story.

"Gabrielli is the cleverest impostor. He contrives to hoodwink people somehow, but it always makes me shudder to think of the poor creatures in his keeping. I know Hilda Temple well; she was at school with my wife. Though there were years between them Eva never forgot the protecting kindness shown her by the 'big girl' when she was a tiny child. It is quite true Mrs. Temple was in urgent need of money, or she would never have gone to Gabrielli. Her husband is better off now. In fact, the secret is safe with you. He owed a sum of money, and was in fear of arrest here in Naples; he is rather idle, and was in debt on all hands. Gabrielli, who knows a true woman when he sees one, had an idea Hilda would be invaluable to him, and advanced the sum required to free Temple, on consideration of his wife's services for six months. We were away at the time, or I need not say she should never have so sacrificed herself. Temple is a good fellow enough, but not equal to his wife. She is a gem of the first instar, and if she helps you your cause is safe!"

Mrs. Temple met the two Englishmen with a frankness which inspired trust, and even without Melville's testimony Douglas would have had

confidence in her; but when he spoke of Ina Fortescue her face grew pale.

"She is as sane as you or I!" said Mrs. Temple, sadly, "and she is just eating her heart away."

"She must be free!"

"I doubt if she would welcome freedom. Oh! Mr. Douglas, they have deceived her cruelly. They declare her mother died mad, and that sooner or later she must inherit the malady. Do you know they have so worked on her generosity the poor child actually regards her imprisonment as a blessing, since it frees you from your troth!"

"My life is worthless to me without her!" said Mr. Douglas. "I believe, myself, the whole story about the mother is a fraud invented by her father for his own end. Mrs. Temple, only help me to free my darling, and I will bless you all my days!"

Hilda looked thoughtful.

"Do you know no escape from Gabrielli's has ever been successful. The risk is terrible!"

"I need not tell you money is no object!"

"Money would be of no avail on any of the attendants. I myself could connive at her leaving the house. We all possess pass-keys; but then, what next! There are spies all around!"

Mrs. Melville, who had listened with breathless interest, interposed.

"Will and I are going on a cruise in our yacht next week. Hilda, it seems a wild idea, but if you could but conceal Miss Fortescue's flight for an hour all might be well. You know it is only two miles from Gabrielli's to the coast."

A boat could be there waiting to take her to the yacht. We would set sail with all speed, and surely pursuit would be evaded!"

Hilda Temple looked thoughtful.

"The risk is terrible!" she whispered. "I have seen one attempted fugitive brought back triumphantly to Gabrielli's. Eva, I think it would kill me to see another!"

"Why should it fall?" protested Eva. "A poor creature, trusting to their own powers, might fall; but, remember, I should be waiting in a carriage close to the garden gates, and we would drive at once to the boat; and once on board the yacht do you think we would give her up. Why, Will and I would be torn in pieces first!"

Hilda Temple looked thoughtful.

"You must write to Gabrielli, sir!" she said to Douglas, "arranging for your father to become an inmate of his establishment. Fix an hour for him to meet you at your hotel to settle the last details. At that very hour have a carriage waiting as near as you can approach to the asylum without attracting notice. Arrange with the boatman to wait for you at the creek, and to make all haste to the yacht. I shall not raise the alarm until I think you have gained it. I shall then send messengers to Naples to the Signor, who will be waiting at the hotel, furious at your delay. Of course there is a certain risk, but I do think there is a hope of success."

"And you," said Silas Gee, warmly. "Will suspicious fall on you, madam!"

"My duties will be nominally over, so I hope not. Even if it does I can bear it better than the thought of leaving Ina in such a place. I can assure you the idea of parting from her has been the one dark spot in my blissful hopes of returning to England."

Money is useful in spite of the way some people try to scoff at its powers. The Melvilles were very rich, and their pleasure-yacht was a first-class vessel, quite capable of sailing round the world had such a feat been necessary. They had talked of a cruise for days, so there was nothing extraordinary in their starting rather hurriedly.

Then Señor Alvarez paid his bill in full, and then repaired to his friend's house with his father. Two hours in retirement quite abolished the two Spaniards, and left in their stead the English detective and his young employer. Both these went on board the yacht at Naples—for Mrs. Melville, with a womanly care for Ina's girlish diffidence, decided that she and her husband would be the friends who first greeted her on her escape.

Hilda Temple, who understood how the poor girl's tenderness for her lover had been worked on, told Ina nothing but that she could not bear to leave her at Gabrielli's, and so some tried friends of her own had offered to take her to England with them, and restore her to Mrs. Cameron's protection.

Ina thanked her with tearful eyes.

"But Randolph," she whispered, "think of him. He will never believe the doom that threatens me, and so my freedom will wreck his life."

"Mrs. Cameron is his own cousin," said Hilda, soothingly. "She will know how to take care of you; and yet not draw him into any marriage that would hurt him."

Oh! the agony of Randolph's suspense! Oh! how he strained his eyes across the water to catch the first sight of the boat which would bring the Melvilles to the yacht. Oh! the rapture with which he saw his girlish love sitting in the stern, her hand locked in Mrs. Melville's!

He remembered Mrs. Temple's warning that he must not appear to her too suddenly; and so, though every fibre of his heart yearned towards her, he went below, and waited with intense anxiety until Will came to him in his cabin with the news that the wind was favourable, and the sails were spread, and all done to ensure their speedy passage.

"She is terribly upset," said the young clergyman, simply. "I have left Eva to soothe her; but, Douglas, take courage. I have seen plenty of people mentally afflicted, and I am sure that girl is as sane as I am."

It was the sixth day after her escape before Ina was well enough to come on deck. It had been deemed best to take a roundabout course so as to elude pursuit. If the Signor discovered who had abducted his prisoner, so that they had actually gone no further than the French coast when Ina, a faint colour in her thin cheeks, came towards Randolph on Mrs. Melville's arm.

(Continued on page 184.)

HAD WE NEVER LOVED SO BLINDLY

—X—

CHAPTER X.

"WHAT'S the matter, Jenny?" asked Emily, with sincere interest, the next day, as she pulled out the fringe of the pink dress preparatory to putting it in seclusion till the next piece of dissipation turned up. "Have you got a headache? or are you only moaning because it is all over?"

"I'm not moaning," pettishly, as she indulged in a good stretch, "only I hadn't an Edgar Windsor to flirt with me last night, and to come to tennis to-day."

"He is coming, so you will have him as much as I shall," smoothing a specially crumpled piece between the palms of her two hands.

"Shall I?" scornfully. "I think he graciously gave me two dances, but he was talking to you the whole day. Not that I wanted him, though, for he's grown an insufferable prig."

Emily's colour heightened, but she saw that her sister was in a ruffled state of mind, so she suppressed her anger in order to avoid a quarrel; and it was something, after all, to think that Mr. Windsor's attentions had been so marked as to call forth Jenny's evident envy.

"Then why do you object?" she said, quietly.

"I never said I did, but—but"—getting very red, and speaking excitedly—"Frank never danced with me once, and he used to like me better than anyone else till Flora came."

"I don't think he ever singled you out especially," with sisterly impartiality. "We were all children, and we played together at school-festivals and that sort of thing."

"He always caught me when he was blinded," with a lump in her throat, and a suspicious redness in her eyes.

"Yes, because you took care to run up against him. I remember Alice teasing you about it."

"We all did, so you needn't put it upon me. He was always the nicest boy at any party, and he was bigger than most of them, so that he could reach the things off Christmas trees."

"But yesterday he was very nice to you; he walked down to the tents with you, and—"

"And that was all! He gave me up at once because Flora came. It really is too bad. Do you think it is because she is paler than I am? I know my cheeks get dreadfully red when I'm hot. Next time I'll drink a lot of vinegar before I start."

Emily burst out laughing.

"And feel so bad that you won't be able to go at all. Jenny, how can you be so ridiculous! And as to Frank, one would really think you had been engaged, and he had jilted you."

"But he did like me, I know he did," looking directly out of the window.

"And so he does still; but I don't suppose he will ever make you Mrs. Rivers. A boy of that age falls in love a hundred times before he settles down, not that he was ever in love with you," she added, conscientiously, for she really thought her sister was going too far. "Just look at me; I've smothered out all the crumples, and folded up my dress."

"I shouldn't have cared if I had had anybody else," in a low voice, getting red to the tips of her ears.

"But you danced ever so many times—I don't know what more you wanted."

"Yes, I danced enough. It would have been dreadful if I had sat down, but you don't see what I mean," hesitating, and looking down. "Nobody cared about me, nobody wanted to flirt with me."

"I hope you wouldn't have flirted with anyone if they had," looking shocked as she tidied up a drawer. "Mamma always said flirting was only fit for garrison backs."

"Of course I wouldn't," she answered, with readiness, for temptation seems always so easy to resist to those who have never been tried, "but I should have liked somebody to wish to do it."

"Lucky nobody did. Flora gets on very well without," taking up a pair of gloves, and looking at the fingers, which were slightly soiled.

"You think so! Edward Johnson said that men never ran after a girl who doesn't."

"Shows how little he knows about it. With fast girls men need only stand still—the girls do the running. Now do get up from that chair, and put away your things."

Jenny rose with a sigh.

"Should you be very sorry if Flora were to marry?"

"Of course not," opening her eyes. "It would be a capital thing for her, if the man were rich."

"But should you like it?" persisted Jenny. "Should you like it from your own point of view?"

"I don't know. I should miss her."

"Way, if Edgar Winder had only admired her, and she were going away, you would jump for joy."

"But he doesn't," said Emily, laconically; and she fell to thinking over many little things which he had said the night before—touching speeches which sounded very well in the moonlight, but seemed quite odd in the daytime.

Was it only a pretty way of putting things, or did he mean anything serious? Her heart was quite in a flutter, and she stole a glance at the cigar-lily, which, though faded to the resemblance of a limp rag, was carefully placed in a glass vase.

"What do you keep that thing for?" asked Jenny, un sympathetically. "You can't pretend that it's alive."

"I never said it was; but it may revive. I've known hot water to do wonders."

"You might as well try to revive a mummy."

No answer.

"Do you think Flora will marry Frank?" as

she sat about smoothing her dress in a lackadaisical manner.

"Very likely. I don't think Lady Rivers would object, for the Trevanions are a good old stock; but she is so desperately fond of Eastace that she can't care for anyone else at present. You see, Frank will go to India, and she won't stay here for ever, and everything may be changed by the time he comes back."

"I'm sure I don't know why it is that I'm not fonder of her," said Jenny, thoughtfully. "She is very good-natured, and never minds how much trouble she takes to make me look nice."

"You are jealous of her—that's it," decided her sister promptly. "And so am I. It is not pleasant to go about with somebody whom everyone puts before us."

"You can't say that of yesterday," interrupted the other, eagerly. "I am sure, to judge by Sir Basil's manner, we might have been the most important people there; and it wasn't on Flora's account," with a triumphant nod of her foxy head, "for he never danced with her once!"

"He didn't dance with anyone. Edgar asked me if he had a wooden leg."

"A wooden leg!" in supremest scorn. "Neither a wooden leg nor a wooden head. That is left for Mr. Winder himself."

"Hark, what's that!" as the sound of horses' hoofs was heard on the gravel.

Out went Jenny's head.

"A groom from the Abbey! Oh, let us run down and see what it is!" excitedly.

Improved to be a note from Sir Basil Fane asking if the young ladies would adjourn their lawn-tennis to Greylands, and bring any friends with them whom they wished to have. Mr. Trevanion seemed none the worse for his last night's exertions, only rather done up, and requiring the tonic of his sister's presence.

The girls were delighted, but, to their great surprise, Mrs. Willoughby looked doubtful.

"I really don't know what to do. I must consult your father."

"But what objection could there be?" cried Emily, opening her eyes. "The ground at the Abbey is much better than ours, and we could leave a message at the Rectory as we go up."

"Oh, mother! do let us go," and Jenny, clasped her hands.

"I will ask your father," said Mrs. Willoughby, bustling off towards the library with the letter in her hand.

After a few minutes she came back again, looking disconcerted.

"How tiresome! Your father's out."

"Never mind; here's a pen and some paper. Sit down here," putting a chair in front of the writing-table and opening a blotting-book.

"But, Emily, don't hurry me. I don't know what to say," sitting down as she was bid, but not taking up the pen. "After finding Flora talking all alone to him yesterday, I don't think she ought to meet him again to-day. It would be like throwing her at his head."

"But I don't see why we shouldn't go!" put in Jenny, her spirits brightening as she saw a chance of shining all by herself, without anyone to put her in the shade. "I dare say Flora would rather stay at home."

"I'd go and ask her," getting up from her seat and hurrying out of the room.

Flora Trevanion was sitting in the cosy little room, which was her own and her brother's private den. The window, framed in trails of white clematis, looked on to the garden, and her eyes had roamed from Schiller's "Wallenstein" on her knee to the lovely world of nature outside. Mrs. Willoughby scattered a pleasant castle in the air as she opened the door.

"I came to tell you, my dear," she began, hesitatingly, "that Sir Basil has asked my girls and yourself to play lawn-tennis at the Abbey."

"Did he say anything of Eastace?" eagerly.

"Yes, Eastace sent his love, and was none the worse. Now, don't you think, my dear, getting very red, and looking anywhere but at the sweet face opposite to her—" that—that, as your brother doesn't really need you—"

The colour rushed into the girl's cheeks.

"I'd much rather not go," she said, quickly.

"I was sure of it," said Mrs. Willoughby, in a tone of such relief that it was evident she had not been sure at all. "I—I dare say you are tired!"

"Give Eastace my love, and tell him to come home as soon as he can;" then she opened her book again, and her guardian's wife left the room with a satisfied smile on her plump face.

CHAPTER XI.

THE two girls and their mother drove off in the blazing sun, the former in high spirits, with their rackets in their hands, and their hopes fixed on small conquests, whilst the latter was not quite easy in her conscience, and did not know if she had done right or wrong in leaving her husband's ward at home, so remained silent and thoughtful, whilst the others chatted merrily.

They stopped at the Rectory, a pretty white house with gabled roof, half-smothered in creepers, and surrounded by trees, as much hidden from view as the face of a Siye barrier. Edgar Winder came out to the gate, and graciously refrained from making any objections to accompany them to the Abbey.

He took his place in the one-horse landau whilst Alice Winder, a prim-looking girl in a white cotton dress, and a brown straw hat, watched them start with a contemptuous smile on her thin lips.

"I really wonder how you can find the energy to go out in such heat as this. A comfortable arm-chair and a book are all the things I care for." And she turned away, not having deceived the others at all by her foolish speech, for both Emily and Jenny concluded that she was dying to come with them.

Mrs. Willoughby did not feel comfortable as she passed through the gate, on one post of which that gruesome placard was still hanging.

She had expressed that part of Sir Basil's letter which referred to Miss Trevanion's brother wanting the tonic of her presence; and she had an instinctive feeling that their welcome would be chilled by the fact of Flora's absence.

And she was right. Sir Basil hurried out to receive his guests in his usually courteous fashion; but as his eye ran over the faces in the carriage his own changed, and his manner was coldly grave as he asked what had become of Miss Trevanion.

"She has a headache—that is to say, she is rather tired, so I thought it best to leave her at home," said Mrs. Willoughby, in a flurry, as she felt his eyes looking through all outside varnish into the recesses of her soul.

"Her brother will be terribly disappointed, and the fresh air might have done her good."

Then he turned to the two girls, who looked shy and embarrassed.

"My cousin is waiting to see if London cannot do as well as Hampshire at tennis."

"Does he belong to any club?" asked Edgar Winder, whose proud boast it was that he had lately joined "The United Cackroches."

"You can ask him," said Sir Basil quietly, as he led them through the hall into one of the drawing-rooms, where a lady was seated in an arm-chair with a piece of work in her lap.

She had a pale, refined face, and was beautifully dressed in black satin, with a large white feather in a white bonnet, and a black lace shawl thrown over her shoulders.

She bowed gracefully as Sir Basil introduced her to the party as "My aunt, Mrs. Fane," and proposed to accompany them into the garden.

Several gentlemen were smoking on the terrace, amongst whom Emily soon recognised Mr. Philip Fane, whom somebody had pointed out to her the evening before.

Sir Basil went up to him and evidently asked him to play tennis, but with a shrug of his shoulders he begged to be excused, after one glance at the rosy-faced Miss Willoughbys.

"I thought you said you would!" said Sir Basil, irritably.

"If the fair Flora had been here I might; but as she isn't I'm going fishing."

Sir Basil turned away with a frown, and Jenny, catching his eye, wished devoutly that they had never come.

The game was made up. Mr. Philip Fane sloped off with a cigar between his lips and his rod in his hand; the two elderly ladies chatted pleasantly as they sat on a seat placed under the walnut-tree; and the other men who did not care to play threw themselves down on the grass, proclaiming their intention to criticize, but really, as men in the country generally do, sinking into talk about horses.

Sir Basil leant against the balustrade of the terrace, apparently deep in thought, whilst Jenny watched him from a distance with anxious eyes. If he would only give her one crumb of attention how thankful she would be!

She put herself in her prettiest attitude, and played with all the skill she could manage, and had the satisfaction of finding out after a supreme effort that he had disappeared, and was nowhere to be seen.

If she could have followed she would have found him in Eustace Trevanion's room.

"Where's Flo?" said the boy, eagerly. "She's not going to cheat me by playing tennis!"

"No, Miss Trevanion is left behind," he said, quietly, "and we are all cheated; but not by her."

"What a confounded shame!" the colour rushing into his fair face. "That's just like them. They're all as jealous as cats!"

"I don't think jealousy can have anything to do with it. They said she had a headache."

"That's a thing Flo never has," said it were a crime that she had been accused of. "Old Willoughby couldn't have been at home—he won't stand any of their nonsense. It is a shame. Oh! if I had a pair of decent legs wouldn't I just go down and fetch her!"

Sir Basil smiled.

"What do you say to my taking you out for a drive and picking up your sister, if she will allow me?"

"Oh, capital!" his face lighting up. "What a sell it will be for the old woman!"

"Do you think Miss Trevanion would come?"

"If I ask her, of course she will," he exclaimed, in the proud consciousness of her intense affection.

"You are ready; and it won't be too much for you!" hiding his own eagerness under an appearance of quiet gravity.

"Do me all the good in the world," beginning to try and stand up.

"Don't be in a hurry. Graham shall come to you, and the carriage isn't ordered yet."

"I don't want Graham; I can manage beautifully. You'll find me in the hall when you are ready to start."

Sir Basil rang the bell and ordered the landau, then went out on to the lawn and asked Mrs. Willoughby if she would excuse him for half-an-hour, as he had promised to take Eustace Trevanion out for a drive.

The solicitor's wife said he was too kind, he gave himself too much trouble, she was afraid about the boy, and Mrs. Fane was such a charming companion that she could want no other.

Then he went away without taking the trouble to impart his intention to any of the loungers on the grass.

When Flora Trevanion said she would rather not go to the Abbey she spoke the truth after a fashion, though she did not like to be left behind. She wanted to see her brother, whom she missed dreadfully every hour of the day. Life seemed quite empty without him, and the house deplorably dull; but she shrank from another meeting with Sir Basil after the look that came on his face when she refused his rose; and she decided that she must give up Eustace for a few days rather than seek him out at the Abbey. But to give him up for one day was hard—harder than anyone could imagine who did not know the close bond that bound the two together; and it

was with a heavy sigh that she took up a book and sauntered out into the garden to read it.

There was not much sympathy between herself and the Willoughbys, but it made her feel lonely to know that they were all out of the house, and there was not a chance of hearing a laugh or the sound of a voice till the solicitor came back from Hardechester, and seven o'clock sent the others hurrying home from the Abbey.

The house was castellated, with large bow windows to the dining and drawing rooms, a porch that looked like the lych gate of a church, with Gloire de Dijon climbing all over it, and a pleasant garden surrounding it on all sides.

There was a fine fir-tree standing straight and tall against the blue sky on one side of the lawn, and a clump at the back of the house, close against the hedge which divided the garden from the road.

This was rather a favourite nook of the brother and sister, and Flora deposited herself on a rocking-chair, determined to forget the world, whilst thinking she was by the world forgot.

She had on a simple black-and-white striped cotton dress, and a sailor-hat with a small crimson rosebud pinned close against her throat, and looked as well dressed as anyone need be. As she tilted back her chair she displayed to view two dainty feet in Oxford shoes, black silk stockings, and dark red cloaks; but there was no one to see but the old retriever, who came and placed himself on the grass by her side, as her self-constituted guardian.

No one to see! A step came along the road, hand was laid upon the fastening of the gate, a tall form in a suit of brown appeared in the full blaze of the sun on the ochre-coloured drive.

Ponto lifted up his head and gave a sonorous bark, which attracted Mr. Frank Rivers's attention to the corner. Off went his hat as a gleam of satisfaction lit up his face.

"Anybody at home, Miss Trevanion?" striding quickly over the close-shaven grass.

"Not a soul, Mr. Rivers," with a demure smile hovering about her lips.

"Then I can't be in anyone's way. May I?" enquiring on to the grass by Ponto's side, before the permission he asked for could be refused, and raising a pair of mischievous blue eyes to her face.

CHAPTER XII.

"You really mustn't stay," said Flora, anxiously, with a look up at the sun-blinded windows of the house, as if there were someone lurking behind them to tell Mrs. Willoughby of the *l'été à la* while she was out.

"But you couldn't turn me out!" raising his eyebrows, but retaining his position. "I'm positively done for. Left my horse at the 'Whisperer'; and walked through cart-loads of dust here."

"About the eighth of a mile! You must be tired!"

"Don't laugh at me. I'm not a Hercules. None of our family demand themselves so far as to have a constitution."

"What does that mean—that you are not strong?" Her eyes resting appreciatively on the well-shaped muscular limbs, and comparing them with her brother's.

"It means that if anything comes upon us—fever or anything—we go out like a candle, without any trouble to anyone. Touching, isn't it? Think how soon you may lose me!"

"You are talking nonsense; not knowing really if he were in fun, but an uncomfortable feeling stealing over her that one day his words might prove true."

"Fact, 'pon my soul. Isn't it luck!" leaping back, with his hands behind his close-cropped head, his eyes still fixed on her. "When I become a burden to your mind—a regular old man of the sea—and you're wondering how to get rid of me, then all of a sudden you'll hear that I'm gone—gone off like a shot without time to bother about saying 'T-t-t-t' like the kids."

"Don't talk like that," taking off her hat,

and pushing back a sunny piece of hair which had fallen across her face. His eyes watched the small white hand, the shell-like pink coming and going on the softness of her cheek, and his lips broadened into a smile as he saw the colour deepening under the intenseness of his gaze. "Why should you be a burden to my mind? I'm not your mother," laughing a little, "nor your sister, and you'll be in India, whilst I shall be here."

"Ah! but I mean to stick to you like a burr. A burr is the right simile for an old friend like me, for I mean to stick to you, whether you like it or not. There!" and his eyes looked almost fierce in the strength of his firm resolve.

Flora bent down, and laid her hand on Ponto's shaggy head.

"Burr are always thrown away," she said, mischievously.

"Then I won't be a burr. Is there anything in nature which can't be thrown away, because I'll be that thing!" his voice vibrating, though he was supposed to be only chaffing.

"A bath-bun is sticky," a twinkle in her eye.

"There is a difference between sticky and sticking. I wouldn't be sticky for the world," with solemn gravity.

"Glad to hear it, for your friend's sake."

He raised himself on his elbow, and the laughter went out of his face.

"Before I go. I want you—"

"Hush! Who's coming?" as she looked towards the gate with startled eyes, and saw a carriage which she did not recognize drive up.

Frank's face lengthened considerably, then he muttered, "I'd better slope," and sulking the action to his words scrambled to his feet, and was off before a footman in a purple and gold livery had had time to throw the gate open.

Flora looked after him, wondering at his quick retreat, and only turned her head in time to see Sir Basil Fane a few paces from her.

She started up with a wild wish to fly, but as that was impossible she stood quite still with parted lips. He noted that there was no welcome either in word or attitude, and the smile left his lips, whilst his eyes grew grave, almost stern. He took off his hat, and bowed low, as if she had been a princess.

"Your brother is in the carriage, and wishes to speak to you."

How her face changed in an instant!

"Oh! how good of you to bring him!" and the next moment she had run to the landau, and seized Eustace's hand in both her own, whilst her sweet face flashed with delight.

"You are none the worse, dear!" anxiously, her eyes fixed earnestly on his smiling face. "You haven't a headache, or anything else?" vague, but comprehensive.

"Much you cared when you wouldn't come to see after me, even when Fane asked you!"

Her face grew rosy red, and Sir Basil, noting the blush, grew happier.

"Might not her seeming aversion," he asked himself, "be nothing but girlish shyness?"

"It was very kind of him," she said, ably, all to prove his thought was true; "but I thought, that is to say Mrs. Willoughby thought—"

"She said you had a headache," looking straight into her eyes, "and if so, a drive will do you good. Will you honour us so far?"

Flora recoiled as if frightened, and the pink in her cheeks grew crimson.

"I don't know. I had better not—but thank you ever so much."

"I take no refusal," said Sir Basil, firmly. "Your brother wants you, and common sense says there is no reason against it. Would you mind taking your place by his side?"

She hesitated—some instinct telling her that she had better not, in spite of Eustace's eager remonstrances.

"I don't know what Mrs. Willoughby would say," her lashes drooping, timidly.

"Absurd! Your brother wants you, and so do I. You can't refuse us both!" holding the door open.

His manner was so imperious that it gave her courage to resist, because it roused her resent-



"YOU REALLY MUSTN'T STAY!" SAID FLORA, ANXIOUSLY.

ment. She drew up her neck slightly, and said at once,—

"Not to-day, thank you."

"To-day or never," he said, quickly, while a light flashed from his eyes. Lowering his voice he added, significantly, "Choose."

"Flora, how can you!" exclaimed Eustace, horrified at what he considered her flagrant rudeness to his friend.

She shook her head, and drew back towards the gate, but at that critical moment Mr. Willoughby rode up on his fat cob, and, after hearty greetings, had the matter explained to him by his wrathful ward.

"The idea of saying she can't come because she thinks Mrs. Willoughby wouldn't like it!" Eustace wound up, angrily.

"My dear child, my wife would be delighted," laying his hand kindly on her shoulder, and taking it for granted that she was longing to go. "Get in, and don't keep them waiting."

"I've no gloves," looking down at her small hands.

"I can't offer to fetch them," said Sir Basil, with a smile; "but I'm quite willing to wait whilst you get them for yourself."

She flew off to the house, rushed upstairs, caught up her gloves, and ran down again.

"You can't have stopped to look at the glass!" he said, in pretended surprise, as he held out his hand to help her in.

"Why? Am I dreadfully untidy?" in alarm.

"Not a bit; but you were so quick. Good-bye, Mr. Willoughby. Your wife and daughters are at the Abbey; I suppose we can't induce you to join them!"

Then an order to the footman, and he leant back in the carriage—as the eager horses started forward—well content now that he was sitting opposite to the only face in Hampshire which seemed to make it worth his while to live.

And Flora, with all her doubts cast aside, felt perfectly happy as she sat by her brother's side,

surreptitiously holding his hand in hers whilst she listened to Sir Basil.

He was telling her something about a poor cripple who was cured in a wonderful manner by a new doctor, and she was so interested on Eustace's account that she never saw who was watching her, with a frown on his fair, young face, from the door of "The Wheatsheaf."

"Did she know he was coming, and was that the reason she hurried me off?" muttered Frank Rivers, to himself, as he mounted his horse, and rode slowly up the lane, forgetting that it was he who had run away so fast that Flora could not have stopped him even if she had had the will.

It was a lovely afternoon, and as they drove along at a rapid pace the scenery was beautiful with wild, luxuriant hedges and leafy woods, and the tender green of the young corn. The birds were singing in the gladness of spring, and Flora's eyes shone with deep delight.

Sir Basil, watching her, said, presently,—

"Isn't this better than sitting alone in a corner?"

"I wasn't alone," she answered, without thinking, simply because she did not wish to allow how much she was enjoying it.

"Not alone! I thought you were. I only saw a dog."

"I saw Rivers at 'The Wheatsheaf,'" exclaimed Eustace, suddenly. "Now, Miss Propriety, I declare you are a humbug! Which was worse, to take a drive with your brother and a friend—"

"Depends upon the friend," she interrupted, hurriedly.

"I assure you 'the friend' would never have invited you if he had known that he was interrupting an assignation," from Sir Basil, stuffy.

"It was not an assignation," her cheeks glowing crimson.

"I beg your pardon, but I thought young ladies did not resolve when their chaperons were out."

"Of course not. I was in the garden, and he only came in for two minutes as you did. I couldn't stop him any more than you!" her eyes flashing resentfully.

"I will not trouble you again," jolly.

"Flora!" in a tone of the keenest reproach from her brother.

A dead silence fell on the party till the carriage stopped, and Sir Basil, getting out, suggested to Flora that they should mount the hill in order to look at a beautiful view of the distant Solent. She obeyed at once, feeling contrite and unhappy.

They walked side by side without a word till they were out of sight as well as earshot, then she turned to him, and said, very humbly,—

"I am afraid I was rude. Will you forgive me?"

"Not rude exactly," with a strange hushiness in his voice, "only you've broken your word."

"How?" looking up at him in surprise, whilst he stood still and looked down into her eyes, his own wistful and very sad.

"How long is it since you promised to do everything that I asked you! And now your only wish seems to be never to do it, except under compulsion!"

She hung her head in utter self-humiliation, conscious of nothing but her own shameful want of gratitude.

"Forgive me, please!" she said, with her whole heart in her voice, as she laid one small hand timidly on his coat-sleeve.

"Child, you don't know how you try me," and he took her hand in his, and clasped it so tight that she could have cried out with pain, whilst an expression came over his handsome face, such as her simple heart could not fathom.

(To be continued.)

In Hebrew marriages the bride stands at the right of the bridegroom. In the marriages of all other religions the reverse is the case.



DR. WARBURTON RANG THE BELL, AND THE PAGE BOWED OUT THE UNWELCOME VISITOR.

CAN YOU BLAME HER?

CHAPTER IX.

NAN was dead!

The bitter loss came home to Hyacinth Carlyle with double force. She had loved her child passionately, and she had looked to this living link between them to reconcile her to her husband; now their babe was only a name, a memory, and Sir John told her, as plainly as words could speak, henceforth they were to be as strangers.

She knew him well, his fierce, unswerving will, his fierce, jealous temperament. In Hyacinth's heart was the terrible certainty he meant every word he said.

Slowly she raised herself to her feet and sat upon a low chair. She was only conscious of one thing—that their future must be settled now—not again would she bear the anguish of such a scene.

"John," and her voice was so faint and exhausted he hardly recognised it, "I do not want your money; if you send me away I will take nothing at your hands."

He stared at her.

"You are speaking romantically. How will you live! Your settlements bring you in nothing until my death. Your father and the Countess will hardly care to have you returned upon their hands."

"I will earn my own living!" said Hyacinth, proudly. "I ought to have done it long ago, instead of marrying you, only I was a coward, and—"

"And afraid of poverty."

She turned away her head.

"It was not that—at least, not that only; I could not bear to think of the loneliness of the life. I wanted love and tenderness so much."

He was nearer being touched now than by anything she had said before.

"We have made a bitter mistake," he said, sadly; "I ought not to have taken a wife who did not love me. You were guilty of deceiving me; we were both wrong."

"And you cannot overlook it; you will not let us begin afresh, with no secrets between us!"

"I could never trust you again!"

She did not try to move him, she only said, sorrowfully,—

"Then I must go away."

"There is no occasion for such a step. You can remain here; I will provide liberally for your keeping up The Elms in its present state, and—"

"I could not do it, I should eat my heart away; the loneliness would kill me!"

"I never meant you to be alone. I should engage a suitable person as companion and chaperon."

"I should hate her!"

"Why?"

"She would be a spy."

"If you do no harm you need fear no spies; besides, she might be a friend. I have no desire to make you miserable. Of course, I should select no one you objected to."

For the first time in the interview a faint ray of hope lighted up Hyacinth's beautiful face.

"There is my old governess, Miss Johnson," she said, quickly; "let me go to her."

"I would prefer she came to you."

"She could not, she is at Ventnor. John, if you send me from you I would rather live with Miss Johnson than anyone in the world!"

"Will you give me her address?" Hyacinth, I wish we had never met. I wish, from the bottom of my heart, I had accepted your first answer to my proposals, and left you free."

She sighed.

"And I wish that even more of our life's history could be changed. What I regret is that you did not leave me when you saw me first, a lonely girl, asleep in the winter snow."

Sir John answered nothing; he gave one look

at his dead child, one glance at his living wife, and then he left the room.

Frede Armitage came and took the desolate girl in her arms. She tried by every tender will to soften the anguish at Hyacinth's heart, but it was in vain. What could a friend do for sorrow such as hers?

Sir John Carlyle went down to Ventnor the next day, and drove straight to the pretty villa where Miss Johnson was staying.

He was shown into a small dining-room, and in a few minutes the spinster joined him.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Sir John! I hope Lady Hyacinth is progressing to recovery."

"She is better."

But his manner was so constrained, the old maid felt there was more to come; she felt Sir John had not travelled all those miles without some special reason.

"You witnessed our courtship, madam," said the Baronet, gravely; "I think you will admit I loved my wife!"

"You loved her passionately!"

"And I have lost her!"

"Not dead!" murmured Miss Johnson, from her tears. "Oh! Sir John! don't tell me that bright, beautiful creature is dead!" forgetting in her agitation his first words had declared his wife "better."

"I almost wish it were so!" rejoined her visitor. "I could easier have borne to lay my wife down beneath the grass and daisies to waste in peace and honour for the resurrection morn than to know about her what I know now!"

White to her very lips was the spinster.

"She has told you?"

"I have found it out. I see from your manner you are in her confidence."

Miss Johnson shook her head.

"I was never in her confidence until it was too late to help her. I never suspected the truth until the error had been committed!"

"And then?"

"And then I did my best for her; it was but

little, but I did it willingly. Only after her engagement to you did I inherit a comfortable independence; had I only had the means I would have offered her a home before."

"You admit, then, she married me for a home!"

"I admit she was afraid to tell you the truth, lest she should be turned homeless on the world."

"The truth! I begin to wonder if there is any truth in woman. Did you ever see my rival—my wife's lover!"

"A strange way of wording it, thought Miss Johnson, but doubtless he could not bring himself to speak of the dead man as Hyacinth's husband."

"Never! I only heard of the connection when the news came of his death. If you will believe me I had never heard his name."

"Dead!" exclaimed Sir John. "When did he die?"

"The news came within a week of your first meeting with Lady Hyacinth, the very day when you proposed for her."

It was all growing clear to Sir John. Only the letter which had summoned his wife to London; what could that mean?

"Largely myself," explained Miss Johnson. "What could I do? The child, as I believed, was dying; it seemed to me against every rule of Heaven and man that his mother should live away."

"The child!" almost gasped Sir John.

"I thought you knew it."

"I had misunderstood—the child—born, I suppose, after my engagement!"

"Born during Hyacinth's absence in Yorkshire. Sir John, what could I do but keep her secret? They were cruel people, the Earl and Countess; what would they have made her life like had they known of the helpless baby depending upon her?"

Quick as thought Sir John remembered their meeting with the doctor from Whitby, and his wife's agitation; quick as thought he recollected that Hyacinth never willingly spoke of Yorkshire, that she seemed to have the strongest objection to talk of her sojourn there.

He had come to Ventnor fearing a living rival; the news he had learned seemed to him even worse. He was a proud man, and the shadow on his wife's past was agony to him.

"I implored Hyacinth to tell you all," continued Miss Johnson; "it seemed to me you loved her, so you must pardon an error of the past. She had suffered so, had gone through such bitter sorrow, I thought you must forgive her."

"I wish she had told me."

"She was afraid. She was in delicate health, her nerves had been terribly shaken. Your engagement was a very brief one, and she never collected her courage to make confession until it was too late."

"And the child?"

"By that time I had inherited a little competency from my uncle. The child lives with me. I loved him first for his mother's sake; latterly for his own. I think it would break my heart to part from him."

Sir John paced up and down the room.

"My wife obeyed your summons. I came home and found her absent. The servants believed her ill in bed when she was in London. Her whole life since our marriage has been one living lie, but I have found her out at last."

"And, in spite of the pain you feel, I think it is for the best," said Miss Johnson, frankly. "Think of the life my poor child has led these fifteen months. She has been as though with a drawn sword suspended over her head. At least now she will have peace. She knows the worst."

"She never cared for me," said Sir John. "Of course, I shall provide for her liberally, and the 'worst' will not be so very bad."

"You cannot mean that you will send her away!"

"I mean that I will never willingly look upon her face again. I mean that so soon as all that remains of my little child has been carried from The Elms either my wife or I leave the house for ever."

"You are a hard judge."

"I can pardon anything but deceit."

"She was so young."

"She was old enough to give up all the world for her lover. She was old enough to know the difference between right and wrong."

Still the kind old woman persevered.

"Think what your lives will be like apart! Think of the lonely years, the cheerless home to which you consign yourself! Think that you are making it impossible for you to have an heir to inherit your great wealth!"

"I have thought of all this, and my decision remains the same. Miss Johnson, will you receive my wife? I would willingly have formed an establishment for her, but the only wish she has expressed concerning her future is that it shall be spent with you. Will you take her to your home, and shelter and watch over her?"

"Willingly."

"Your kindness, your affection nothing can repay; but you will let me send you such sums from time to time as may prevent my wife from being a burden to you."

"No, I will receive your wife willingly, gladly, because I love her; but I will take nothing from you, Sir John. I think you are treating my child cruelly. I will have no share of your wealth. If Lady Hyacinth will come to me, the best I have to offer shall be here, but I could not touch your gold."

"I will leave the decision with herself. Madam, you have loved my wife for years. It is natural you should judge me hastily. You forget the agony of discovering that the creature I deemed almost an angel is—"

"A loving, suffering woman," said Miss Johnson, finishing the sentence for him. "Well, Sir John, we must think differently. Send me your wife, and I will cherish her tenderly. I can say no more."

Sir John returned to The Elms. He never saw his wife. He followed his little girl to the grave, and then he sent a message to Freda Armitage to join him in the library.

She came to him with streaming eyes.

"Hyacinth has left."

"Left!"

"She has gone to London. She said she only stayed in this house while Nan was here. John, she has told me everything."

"Everything!"

"It was last night. She sobbed out her story in my arms, as though she had been my sister. John, it was so sad, so pitiful! Can you blame her?"

He turned his head.

"It seems to me," said Freda, "she has suffered so much; she has had such bitter sorrow, such terrible apprehensions, that her anguish must have atoned for her error. John, it cannot be that you will not forgive her—that this miserable estrangement will last out both your lives!"

"I will never look upon her face again."

"And yet you loved her?"

"Not loved—love her," corrected the unhappy man. "Ah, Freda! If only my affection were in the past, I might judge her more mercifully. If I did not love her with every fibre of my nature I might find it easier to forget; but she was my ideal of all that was pure and true and womanly. I worshipped her as something almost an angel—and see the result."

Freda shuddered.

"I would not have believed you could be so hard and severe and unforgiving."

"Lady Hyacinth left no message, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"Give it to me."

She hesitated.

"I am waiting, Freda."

"You don't deserve it."

"Tell it me."

"It was when she was going. She turned to me suddenly, and said: 'Tell my husband I spoke the truth. I married him without love; but I love him now as my own soul. He may never forgive me; he may cherish his anger to my life's end. But, if ever his heart softens, if ever the thought of our little child makes

him more merciful to her mother, he will find me always ready. While I live I shall never quite despair that time may restore his love to me—his love and trust.'"

"His love, perhaps," said Sir John, moved more than he cared to show, "but not his trust—and love without trust is worthless."

In the glad spring time Henry Yorke and his fiancée were married in a quaint old church near Mrs. Armitage's lodgings. Both the widow and her second daughter were anxious to share Mrs. Yorke's home; but Freda, with quiet determination, refused to listen to their hints on the subject.

"Alice always makes people unhappy," she said to her husband, "and I don't think mamma is the sort of woman to add to the comfort in another person's home, but sometimes in her holidays, Henry, I will ask you to invite Aggy."

Of course, the bridegroom acquiesced the pleasure it would afford him to do so, and that very next summer Agnes spent her whole vacation at the pleasant rural rectory to such good purpose that a gentleman who farmed his own land a few miles off, and had secretly envied the young rector's felicity, thought he could not do better than secure her for his wife.

His means were ample, his temper good, and his age suitable.

Agnes, moreover, fell in love with him, and so the end of it was she never returned to Mecklenburgh-street, but became mistress of one of the prettiest homes made in Sussex, greatly to Alice's chagrin, for that young lady believed to this very day that had she only been the rector's guest instead of Agnes, the same gratifying results would have happened to her—a belief the Yorkes are far from sharing.

Mrs. Marshall often drove over to spend a few hours in the rectory drawing-room, and one cold autumn afternoon, when she and her sister were sitting cozily *tête à tête*, she said suddenly,—

"Freda, do you know it is just a year since you went to stay at The Elms?"

"Is it?"

"Yes, and I am thinking both you and I owe our happiness, at least indirectly, to Lady Hyacinth! What a sweet creature she must have been!"

Freda's eyes were full of tears.

"Why do you never speak of her?" asked Agnes, gently.

"I have heard Henry say she is travelling for her health; but it is almost a year since the little girl died; and yet there is no news of her return."

"She will never return to The Elms, Aggy."

"But—"

"It is a miserable story," said the rector's wife, gravely; "I cannot tell you. Only don't think harshly of Lady Hyacinth."

"Do you mean she quarrelled with her husband? Well, he always was a domineering temper."

"There is an estrangement between them."

The happy young wife looked full of sympathy.

"Can nothing be done, Freda?"

"Nothing I fear, dear."

"And where are they really?"

"Lady Hyacinth is in the Isle of Wight. Sir John is travelling over the world. He was in Africa last time we heard; he may be among the icebergs in Greenland now for aught I know."

"Does no one know?"

"No one, I suspect. I destroy every few months he sends an address to his bankers, but even they are not kept very well informed of his whereabouts."

The old postman was walking up the drive. Agnes ran out and took the letter from him, very careless of her mistress's dignity as young Mrs. Marshall.

"There for the Rector and one for you—from a stranger, I should say. Who on earth do you know at St. Edmunds?" looking at the postmark.

Freda Yorke tore open the envelope, and took out the contents—a small sheet of grey repp paper folded in two. It was very short, barely two sides being covered in a quaint, old-

fashioned hand. It bore the address of "The Golden Rain," St. Edmunds, and the date of two days before.

"DEAR MADAM,—

"Although personally unknown to you, I trespass on your attention to tell you of the death of my dear friend, and sometime pupil, the Lady Hyacinth Carlyle, which occurred after only a few days' illness. It was her express desire that I should ask you to write and acquaint her husband of his freedom—so she spoke of her own end. I have already communicated with her parents, but am ignorant of Sir John's movements. Lady Hyacinth was very dear to me, and yet she seemed so tired and weary of her life that I, who loved her, could not wish to keep her here. I have the honour to forward you a slight memorial of my lost darling, and am, yours truly,

"W. JOHNSON."

The "memorial," which came that very evening, was a string of pearls, which Freda well remembered seeing on the dead girl's white neck. There was a strange hush over the little party at the Rectory that night.

"I wish I had seen her," said Freda, for about the twentieth time. "Fancy, Henry, she was not twenty-one—so young to die!"

The Rector replied,—

"You may well call me harsh, Freda, but it seems to me Heaven has only shown mercy to the poor young creature in taking her to herself. At best her life must have been a sad one."

"What will her husband say?"

It was months before that question could be answered. Mrs. Yorke had been quite right in her surmise—Sir John's bankers were often weeks together without his address. Hyacinth died in November; it was only in the following February their client wrote, saying that all letters were to be sent to him at the Hotel Bristol, Paris.

Truth to say, he did not expect any correspondence of moment. His fingers shook just a little as he took up the broad, black-bordered envelope which lay foremost in the packet; then he felt surprised—it was Freda Yorke's handwriting! Why should she write to him?

She had enclosed Miss Johnson's letter with a very few lines from herself, of sympathy for him. It was a tender womanly note, and she would up with these words,—

"There were few to mourn her on earth, and she was so 'tired.' Don't you think the Almighty, in His mercy, took her to the Heaven where her little girl was waiting for her?"

His first impulse was to go straight to St. Edmunds and put up at "The Golden Rain." Guests were at a premium that cold winter weather, and he found the whole resources of the hotel at his disposal; but he learned very little. The chamber-maid told him a lady of the name of Johnson had come there in November. She was dressed in the deepest mourning, and wore a thick crapa velv, which she never raised. She asked, as a favour, to be allowed to occupy a certain sitting-room (whose number she quoted) for a few hours; she ordered tea and writing materials. Finding she did not ring for the tray to be removed the chamber-maid went upstairs. The tea was there untouched, and a letter lay on the table addressed to Mrs. Henry Yorke, but the lady herself had vanished. A golden sovereign had been put in the cup, in a slip of paper endorsed "in payment," and the solitary visitor had evidently departed.

"She was always eccentric," murmured Sir John, half to himself.

"Aye, sir," chimed in the chamber-maid, "and with that veil one would never be able to recognise her. She might have been an old woman or a young girl, no one could say."

"It was strange to come here for so brief a time!"

"I think, sir, she had some associations with the place. She seemed to know her own way to the room, and she said in a low tone when she went in that it was just the same—nothing had altered but herself. She had a low, sweet voice."

I know I felt sorely for her—I could not get her out of my head for days past."

There was nothing to be gained by lingering. Sir John went back to London, sure of but one thing—his wife was dead. How she died, of what disease, what provision had been made for her orphan child, he could not tell. Lord and Lady Norman were in town, and Sir John called on them the day after his return from "The Golden Rain;" both were attired in the deepest mourning.

"This is a terrible thing," said the Earl, fretfully. "What could have caused Hyacinth's death? She was a mere child; I never looked to follow her to the grave."

"I was travelling," replied his son-in-law, helplessly. "The news has only just reached me."

"It's a pity you didn't take her with you. She just moped herself into a decline."

"And you saw her?"

"Not alive," said the Countess, with more show of feeling than Sir John would have given her credit for. "We were sent for, and we travelled down as fast as possible, but it was too late—we got there a few hours too late."

"Where did she die?"

"At Whitby. It was the strangest fancy to take her there. I fancy she had great faith in some doctor there. She is buried in the churchyard."

A little more conversation followed. The Baroness made it quite plain that he should never seek to disturb the Normans in the possession of Normanhurst, and they parted good friends. The Earl and Countess had their suspicions the match had not turned out happily, but they had no idea of the real facts of Hyacinth's estrangement from her husband.

Sir John Carlyle felt as one stricken by a sudden blow. Long ago he had told himself Hyacinth henceforward could be nothing to him, long ago he had deemed for all time they must be strangers; but now that she was gone—now that nothing could bring her back—an awful remorse seized him. After all, she had suffered dreadfully, after all she was his life's love—and what pleasure had life held for him since he had sent her from him? If ever man regretted harshness, Sir John deplored the severity which he used towards the fair girl—half-child, half-woman—whom he had made his wife. But it was too late!

Too late! No remorse could bring back his darling. No wild regrets could undo that save when she knelt at his feet for mercy and he spurned her from him. No, never more should he hear the only voice which made music for him, never more should he press in his arms the beautiful form of his wife. She was gone to her little child. On earth Nan had seemed happiest in her mother's arms—maybe Heaven felt lonely to the babe all by herself. Well, now she had mother.

He went to Whitby, he could not have told why. He could not have explained the feeling, only he believed if he stood by her grave he must realise his wife was dead. As yet he had not done so. He told himself the bitter truth. He read Mrs. Yorke's letter again and again, but in spite of all he could not realise that Hyacinth was dead. It seemed to him that she was away, travelling on some long journey, weary and tired, perhaps, but still not gone. He seemed to think of his wife as lost to him indeed for a time, but he could not, would not, understand that no summer heat or winter storm could bring her back—that the girl he had madly loved and passionately wooed was taken to a better world.

He went to Whitby and put up at the "Royal." He called forth early the next day to the spot where Lady Norman told him he should find his wife's grave. He had not far to seek. The very newness of the stone, the dazzling freshness of the letters guided him to the spot, and the grief which struggled in his heart, the burden of misery and remorse, found vent there. Strong man as he was the tears rolled down his face as he stood by his wife's grave.

His wife's grave! That little plot of ground covered all that was left of her. Think of it, you

husbands and wives whose married lives does not run quite smoothly! When you would give impatient answers, when you would say cruel careless words—when you would imply, perhaps, marriage had not brought you all you hoped for, that if the time was to come again you might choose differently. When such thoughts rise in your breast, when such words hover on your lips, think how you would feel if a narrow strip of earth covered all that was mortal of your life's partner, if the woman who wore your wedding ring or the man who owned your obedience were lying cold and still beneath the grass-green turf, waiting for the resurrection of the just!

I trow you would be patient then. I trow you would be tender.

John Carlyle stood by his wife's grave. Upon the pure white marble he read the simple inscription:—

HYACINTH CARLYLE.

Age 20.

"I will give you rest."

Rest! Surely none needed it more—rest from the storms of life, from the fitful fever of passion, from the errors and mistakes of humanity. Rest! Surely it was the boon his wife would most have craved!

He must have stood an hour by that grave. It seemed to him his youth lay buried there. At last he seemed to retrace his steps, and in passing down one of the quaint old streets he saw a house with a brass plate inscribed:—"Dr. Warburton."

He stopped. Memory carried him back to his honeymoon. He remembered meeting this physician at one of the noblest houses in Paris. He recollected the doctor claiming acquaintance with his wife, her avowal, and the man of medicine afterwards acknowledging his mistake. Of course this was the doctor in whom she had faith, the same man, doubtless, who had attended her upon her marriage, he who had also, perhaps, smoothed her dying pillow. Miss Johnson might be unattainable, but Dr. Warburton was not. He would go in and boldly claim a few minutes of the great man's time to tell him of his wife's last hours. Surely she had sent some message for him!—surely his name had been once upon her lips!

He knocked and asked for Dr. Warburton. A neat page regretted that his master was out. Sir John inquired when he would be in. The page had no idea. There was nothing for it but to leave his card and depart, promising to return another time.

At lunch that day Dr. Warburton read the name upon the card and turned to his page.—

"Thomas, if this gentleman calls when I am at home tell him I am particularly engaged."

The boy started.

"He'll come again, sir."

"Let him. He may come a dozen times; I shall refuse to see him."

In point of fact, Sir John did present himself at least six times without gaining the least satisfaction, when he chanced to see the doctor's figure in the distance, seated in his brougham, evidently homeward bound.

Sir John hired a fly, urged the man to speed, and reached the physician's house at the exact moment he alighted from his brougham.

Further denial was useless; Dr. Warburton was in for the interview he had done so much to avoid.

"This is a fortunate chance," said Sir John, politely; "I began to despair of seeing you."

The doctor stared at him haughtily.

"May I ask the nature of your business, Sir John Carlyle. A gentleman would surely have understood, from the very plain hints I have given you, that I desire neither your acquaintance nor your patronage."

Sir John was amazed.

"At least you cannot refuse to see me now, I will not detain you long."

"I suppose I have no choice."

It was not a very cordial invitation, but Sir

John accepted it rapturously, and followed the physician into his consulting-room.

It was handsomely furnished, and there were two comfortable easy chairs close to the fire, but neither of them were offered to the Baronet; Dr. Warburton himself stood leaning against the wall, and never invited his companion to be seated.

"I have come to ask you about my wife."

"Your anxiety is touching. It is just about three months since that grave was dug in our churchyard, and you actually find time to inquire about her."

"I have been abroad."

"Indeed!"

"Evidently you are prepossessed against me. I don't know what you have heard, or what you believe. I can only tell you that if my fortune would bring my poor girl back to life, it should be spent willingly in the attempt."

"It would be a cruel attempt."

"How so?"

"Because the poor girl you made your wife had known so much sorrow, borne so much suffering, that no one with a heart in their breast could have sorrowed at her being taken from her troubles."

"You knew her well?"

"I know her whole history," replied the physician, with a strong emphasis on the adjective.

"And you recognised her when you met us in Paris on our honeymoon?"

"I did; but I then knew only part of her story. It seemed to me then it would have been a cruel kindness to have forced myself on her notice. Now that I know the truth I only wish I had done so."

"You know the particulars of our estrangement?"

"I know the story of your baroness. I prefer plain speaking, Sir John; it takes two people to cause an estrangement. The coolness between you and Lady Hyacinth was your own doing alone. It was easy to see that here, lonely, deserted, she loved you ten times more than she had done at Paris, a courted, idolised bride."

Sir John sighed.

"She is dead. I would not force our divisions upon you. I wanted to know the particulars of her illness—whether she spoke of me?"

"She died because she had no wish to live," replied Dr. Warburton. "If I thought for hours I wouldn't find a truer designation of her illness. She had got it into her poor loving heart that since for all time you had refused her your forgiveness, she did you a positive injury by living; that if only she were gone you might bring home another wife to share your wealth, to give you heirs, maybe, to the grand abode you deemed her unfit to rule over. Women are proverbially unselfish, but I think I never knew one so much so as Lady Hyacinth."

"Could nothing have saved her—nothing in the world, Dr. Warburton?"

"Only one thing."

"And that?"

"I would prefer not to tell you!"

"But I had rather know!"

"Happiness."

Sir John shuddered. He felt as if indeed the physician meant him to feel that his wife had been as surely done to death by his unkindness as though he had plunged a dagger into her heart.

"Miss Johnson was with her to the last, I suppose? I wish I could find her."

"Miss Johnson was with her to the last. She loved your wife with a mother's tenderness. You will never find her, for she has gone over to the great majority."

"Not dead?"

"Even so!"

Sir John felt bewildered.

"And the child?"

"What child?"

"You must know without my telling you how disagreeable the subject is to me—I mean the child whose existence parted me from my wife."

"Then why speak of that poor boy if the subject is distasteful to you?"

"For her sake he must not want," said Sir

John, feeling himself a model of generosity. "For his mother's sake I should be willing to allow a moderate sum for his maintenance."

"Very liberal, I'm sure," said the doctor, with a polite sneer. "I'm quite astonished; but, Sir John, the little lad inherited Miss Johnson's property, and so is implicitly provided for. Were it otherwise I should have adopted him myself. I am a lonely man, and I don't think I ever saw a child I coveted more. He is a noble little fellow."

Sir John felt nonplussed.

"What is his name?"

"Pardon me, I hardly see what business you have to inquire."

"I should have said by what name was he called?"

Dr. Warburton hardly understood the difference in the question.

"By his own, of course. Now, Sir John, it will bring nothing but pain to us to prolong this interview. You evidently expect me to be sorry for you, and I can't. You have contrived to do very well without your wife for more than a year, so you have only to continue the same course. I daresay you will contrive to find another bride before many months. The poor child who lies in yonder churchyard will soon be nothing more to you than an episode in your past. You are young still; three years in your life troubled by my poor patient are but a trifle to you."

He rang the bell, and the page bowed out the unwelcome visitor. Rarely had Sir John been so annoyed. He felt indignant with the doctor, and yet he liked the man for his defense of Hyacinth.

It dawned on Sir John slowly that, with all her faults, the girl he had married had been made of noble stuff. She had at least been almost selfless; she had died, as the physician told him, just from want of happiness, and it was his fault.

Very, very sad were the Baronet's thoughts as he returned to London to take up again the life he led three years before when, riding homewards, he found hidden in the snow the one woman whom he ever loved.

For he never loved again. In spite of Dr. Warburton's cool, sarcastic advice—in spite of the efforts of many a marvellous mother, Sir John Carlyle never again loved woman—as he had loved Hyacinth.

His visitor gone, Dr. Warburton poured himself out a glass of brown sherry, and drank it at one draught, rubbing his hands the while.

"I begin to think I have mistaken my vocation," he muttered to himself. "I should have made a first-rate actor. I rather think I made the noble Baronet ashamed of himself. And yet"—here his voice grew grave—"what good can it do her, poor child! She has sacrificed herself. It was a noble thought. She told me it was the only thing she craved in life, and I could not thwart her, but it was hardly right. Why should one human creature be annihilated for the benefit of another? Why should a woman do away with her very self to please an unnatural husband?"

He left the questions unanswered, and went to the writing-table to examine his letters.

Reader, do not start; do not ask sarcastically if I believe in ghosts, or have any spiritualistic correspondence. I indignantly answer No! to such queries.

And yet—the first letter Dr. Warburton opened was signed with the name of the dead girl in the churchyard—Hyacinth Carlyle.

(To be continued.)

In Webster Canyon, Utah, is a remarkable natural curiosity called the Devil's Slide. It is a smooth, white stone road extending from the base of the mountain to its summit. On either side of the floor, which is fifteen feet wide, is a wall of the same sort of rock rising to a height of between ten feet and thirty feet. The mountain is of red sandstone, and the slide has all the appearance of having been built by man, so regular and smooth is it.

SET APART.

—101—

(Continued from page 177.)

That lady at once remembered something she had forgotten in the cabin, and went below, and so the lovers met alone.

"My darling!" said Randolph, wistfully, "how you must have suffered."

She tried to draw away her hand.

"You don't know I—you haven't heard!"

"Dear, I know everything. It is you who have been deceived."

"But my mother!"

"Your mother, dear, was a Miss Trevor, whom both my parents knew and admired. Before I left England, I saw the woman who had been with your mother throughout her married life, and she declared positively her mistress was as sane as she was. The slander was invented by Lord Fortescue."

"But why?"

"That I cannot tell you, sweetheart; but I think we shall soon find out. The woman I have mentioned promised me when I brought you to England she would explain everything. My friend Mr. Melville is now on shore posting letters, summoning her and Mrs. Cameron to meet us at Plymouth."

"Dear Mrs. Cameron! How I long to see her!"

"My father is coming too; and you must leave him for my sake. I saw, if you knew all I suffered while your fate was a mystery!"

She shuddered.

"Ellerslie was terrible! I was so afraid of my father; and no one else could speak a word of English, except Nello's nurse, Janet."

Randolph started.

"Was Janet kind to you?"

"I never liked her, but I think she meant to be good to me. She tried to warn me against Signor Gabrielli."

"I fancy, I see, it is this Janet who gave me the clue. If so, I shall be grateful to her all my days. Only fancy, child, but for her I should never have known what they had done with my darling!"

"They reached Plymouth in due time, and found Sir Ralph Douglas and Mrs. Cameron waiting to greet them. The Melvilles would not land; they had left Italy in a great hurry, and were forced to return as soon as they had seen Ima safely in the charge of her old friends."

Sir Ralph kissed his son's choice with all a father's fondness.

"You are your mother's image, my dear!" he said, simply; "and she was as good and true as my own dear wife. Never believe anyone who tells you otherwise."

Sir Ralph had taken rooms for the whole party at an hotel. While Mrs. Cameron was exchanging confidences with Ima the Baronet and his son took a stroll down the quaint old town.

"You must marry her out of hand, my boy. Lord Fortescue is furious. There are rewards for her apprehension in every newspaper. Whatever the man's motive is in objecting to the marriage his opposition is very genuine."

"I desire nothing better than to make her my own at once," said Ran, cheerfully; "but has not Janet come? I did not think she would fall in."

Nor did she. They found her waiting at the hotel on their return. She told them frankly she had injured Ima. Years ago she had accepted a heavy bribe from Noel Fortescue to keep silent while he committed a great wrong. She felt no remorse until she was face to face with Ima's fair, sweet girlish grace; then she determined, at any cost, she would come forward and defend her.

She was too late. It was announced at Ellerslie Miss Fortescue was returning to Mrs. Cameron under the escort of Signor Gabrielli.

Even Janet was taken in by the fable. It was not till days afterwards that by listening at doors and other underhand means she learned the truth. She told Randolph enough to put

him on the right scent, but she kept back the strangest thing of all—the true motive for Noel Fortescue's insisting to live apart.

"I meant to make terms with you," said the woman, reluctantly, "and sell my secret dear; but when I think of all she's suffered, and how her life itself might have been lost through my taking that man's money years ago to hold my tongue, why, I can't ask for another bribe. I'll tell you the truth just for her sake. You've only to look at this, and you'll understand all that's puzzled you."

"This," was the certificate of a marriage celebrated in June, 'sixty-five, between Garnet Fortescue, bachelor, and Margaret Trevor, spinster, at old St. Pancras Church, London. It conveyed no meaning to Randolph, but his father grasped the truth at once.

"I see it all. I knew Garnet admired her, but he had seen so little of her I never guessed it could be he who had won her love; and he was so fond of his brother, whom she had rejected, he would rather hide his happiness than wound Fortescue's feelings."

It was just as Sir Ralph said. Garnet Fortescue, the second brother, had wooed and won Margaret Trevor; but between him and Lord Fortescue (Sir Ralph's old comrade) was a very tender union. Rather than appear as the peer's successful rival he kept his marriage secret. His young wife died at their child's birth. He meant then to make confession but he put it off; and his death from an accident was too sudden for him to send for Lord Fortescue. To his brother Noel, who was with him, he confided the story and the proofs of his little girl's birth, begging him to take the child to her elder uncle, and beg him to make fitting provision for her.

Most misplaced confidence. Noel saw in the baby a hated rival. Both title and estates were strictly entailed, but could descend in the female line. The tiny child stood between him and immense wealth. He could not bring himself openly to harm her; but he never revealed her existence to his brother, but put her out to nurse as his own child.

Perhaps at the outset he did not mean to really injure her lastingly. Perhaps he thought of calling her his daughter. He only meant to defer her enjoying her inheritance until his own death, when, as his child, she would come in for all of which he had deprived her.

But alas! the secrets of possession were pleasant to him. He grew in time to hate the child he had wronged.

When he married Paulina Gabrielli, and in time had a son of his own, he conceived the cruel idea of either immuring the orphan in a private asylum, or of helping her out of the world.

So the mystery of Ina Fortescue was clear at last. Sir Ralph himself went down to Eilerside to summon Noel to disgorge his ill-gotten gains.

But the thief had fled with his wife and child, taking all the available money he could lay his hands upon.

No pursuit was ever made. Ina's friends declared she was rich enough, and that it would be lost labour to prosecute the fugitive.

Garnet Fortescue's marriage was proved beyond dispute, and his daughter's birth.

Gentle Mrs. Cameron was installed at Ardleigh as chaperon and companion to the young heiress, Lady Fortescue.

But she did not bear that title long. Randolph Douglas, who had loved her in the time of her obscurity, and through all her troubles, was slower to urge his suit when he found how vast were her possessions. But Sir Ralph, who understood the girl's loving nature, blamed his son, and told him he was casting a cruel slight on Ina by seeming to doubt her love.

And so, when the Christmas holly decked the village church, the beautiful young heiress gave her hand to the man who won her heart in the glad summer days at Violet Cottage.

The Melvilles came from Italy to grace the ceremony, and be sure that Hilda Temple was not absent. But the bride walked down on her husband's arm plain Mistress Douglas.

Ina had resolutely refused to bear any title

unshared by her husband; and so before her marriage she resigned the Fortescue peerage in favour of her first-born son, or if she died childless in favour of her next-of-kin.

This would have been the uncle who so ill-used her; but we are glad to say there is no chance of Noel Fortescue ever again bearing the title he once usurped, for at this moment there is a long white-robed baby who is already saluted by the villagers of Ardleigh as the young Lord Fortescue, and who, in the eyes of graceful Lady Douglas (Sir Ralph only lived long enough to greet his grandson), is already the most important member of the peerage.

Mrs. Cameron lives at Ardleigh with her adopted daughter, and in time to come, no doubt will delight that hopeful young nobleman we have just alluded to with the stories of the perils of Ina Fortescue, and how she was rescued by love.

(THE END)

SWEETHEART AND TRUE.

—30—

CHAPTER VII.

"What is love? It's not hereafter;
Present mirth and pleasant laughter,
What's to come is still unsure."

OLIVE and Alan Olchester moved away slowly over the rough stones in the Quimpaire marketplace side by side.

For the space of three minutes neither of them hazarded any information one to the other, and yet each felt perfectly contented with things as they were.

Then he pulled out his cigarette case, saying,—

"You don't mind my smoking, do you?"

"Oh, no! not in the very least. I like the smell of tobacco very much," she answers, simply.

"And, now, where are we going first? You are close, remember, and I place myself unreservedly in your hands, to be taken wherever you choose to take me," he goes on, lighting his cigarette. "I think we have done the market sufficiently, don't you? Suppose we seek fresh pastures in search of the picturesque. What do you say?" he queries, turning his head to look at her.

She has only a fresh, buff-coloured cotton gown on, most simply made, and a plaited straw hat with a knot of buff ribbon in front of it. Nothing could be plainer or less artificial in texture and make, yet he thinks how admirably each become this pretty little thing by his side, who is so friendly and full of sweet simplicity, and so charmingly and completely original.

"Just as you please," she rejoins, at once.

"If you think you have seen enough of the market would you care to go to the cathedral first? There is a very handsome altar to be seen, and a few statues."

"Anywhere!" he says, evenly. "I give myself up to my guide with implicit confidence. Whither you go I will follow after, and be very glad to do so, too," he ends up more briskly.

And without further parley on the subject of sight-seeing they wend their way to the cathedral of Saint Corentin, and duly inspect it.

Then they wander through the old paved streets of Quimpaire, where the houses almost shake hands across the road from the upper carved dormer windows; gaze into the shops, where are set out the quaint old Breton embroideries, some of which Alan goes in and buys, while Olive merely does the bargaining for them.

It is a pleasant pilgrimage to both. The acquaintance so oddly begun is fast ripening into something akin to friendship. Already they seem to have known each other for years—not only known, but also appreciated each other.

At last their wanderings bring them down to the beautiful old quay, past which runs the

Odet River, swiftly and evenly, bearing the big boats and small-shed vessels from the sea on its bosom.

"Let us rest a little time," Alan says, as they stand looking at the running water, which reflects the boats and tops of the houses dotted along its side. "Sit and look at the view, for it is lovely here, perfectly peaceful and calm! It makes one feel drowsily content; at least, it does me. Let us rest and enjoy it. The *dolce far niente* is already stealing over me," and his grey eyes rest thoughtfully on the girl's face beside him.

"I am afraid I shall not be able to rest for very long, and enjoy the view," she rejoins, with a tinge of regret in her voice. "I have not an idea what the time is, but I am sure it must be getting on!"

"Never mind about the time!" he argues, with all a man's thoughtlessness; "we will not think about time now!"

"But I must, you see," she says, smiling. "I promised Nannette I would not be gone long, and I have been away for hours, I am certain. She will wonder where I am, and think I am lost, perhaps!"

"Not with me!" he puts in quickly; "you would be quite safe with me!"

"Possibly!" she rejoins, with a little hot flush and wrinkle of her pretty brow. "I dare say I should be, but then Nannette might not know that I was still with you. I never leave her for long, and I know that I must have been away for ages!" she adds, rather remorsefully.

"Well, let us rest for one quarter of an hour. I won't ask for any longer than that," he says, quite pleadingly.

"Certainly!" she assents, demurely; "you can rest as long as ever you like, it is only I who will have to go!"

"And leave me all by myself! What dreadful cruelty to animals!" he answers, complainingly, in a quietly, reproachful tone. "Why, I should never find my way back into the town again if I lost my guide! Besides, I could not possibly rest here by myself. No, when you go I shall go too! We came together, we will return together!" he ends, very decidedly.

"Well, one quarter of an hour, then, just fifteen minutes from now, to look at the view," she says, sitting down on the trunk of a tree lying on the quay, waiting to be shipped away. "You have a watch, and shall time it. What is the hour now?"

"Listen! There is the cathedral clock beginning to strike. How it booms out through the air!"

"Four!" counts Olive, in dismay. "Can it be really four o'clock. Why, I ought to have been back with Nannette long before!"

"Yes, I sadly fear that cathedral clock only spoke the truth!" he returns, seating himself also on the tree-trunk beside her. "Myself, I only wish it was not four! I could begin the day all over again, or rather, our wanderings, I should say, for I own that they have, indeed, been pleasant wanderings to me!"

If he is fishing for any eager confirmation of this same sentiment on the girl's part he must be grievously disappointed in his desire, for Olive vouchsafes nothing in return for this extremely pretty speech.

She passes it completely by, as if she had never heard it, or that he had never uttered it in such an earnest fashion.

"Does it ever strike you how oddly things come about sometimes?" he goes on, presently, meditatively gazing as the water slides past the quiet old quay. "Now, who would have thought, four days ago—only four days, mind!—that you and I would be sitting here on the Quimpaire quay at this present moment? Why, we had not a notion even of our different existences four days back! And now it seems strange to think that there was a time when we did not know each other. At least, it does to me."

"Yes," says the girl briefly, "only four days ago! It is a very short time."

And she thought to herself, "If I had not stayed that night by the river I should not have picked up that sketch-book, and probably never

have known him at all." He was right when he said things came about oddly sometimes!

"Short!" he repeats after her; "it seems quite a long time to me, quite far back in the past! As I said before, we seem to have known each other for years instead of only days—just three fleeting days! Only think of it!"

"So I do!" she answers, quaintly; "I have thought about it a great many times!"

"Have you?" he rejoins, turning his head once more to look at her instead of the river, and she fancies the grey eyes look pleased at her candour. "And did it not seem strange to you? But perhaps you are not prone to look at circumstances in the same light!" he amends, as a finish to his speech.

"I don't exactly know that I have thought it especially strange," she answers, emphasising the last word of her sentence.

"What then! How do you look upon it? Not as a disagreeable fact, I hope!"

"Oh, no! not disagreeable by any means," she says, quickly. "Do not think I mean that. On the contrary, I think—I think—it rather a pleasant fact than not."

She half repents her words the moment they have passed her lips, but, having been uttered, they cannot be recalled.

"I agree with you," he puts in at once; "it is not strange, it's pleasant. Let me add very pleasant as better still, if I may, without risking offending you by my plain speaking."

"I am not so easily offended," returns Olive, with a fine smile on her lips.

"No; I do not think you are. I imagine you much too frank and ingenuous a young lady to be quickly offended," approvingly.

"Do not credit me with too many good qualities, please," she says, with the faintest shrug.

"Why not?"

"Why! Because I probably do not deserve them," she answers, half-jokingly, half in earnest.

"But I may credit you with being frank and ingenuous, for you most certainly are both. They are not too good qualities to be true, I am sure. Do not undervalue yourself; it is always a mistake in this world. The more one thinks of oneself, the more others will think of one. It sounds a very egotistical kind of doctrine, I daresay, but it does not make it any the less true for all that. Look at me," he goes on, comically; "I never lose an opportunity of blowing my own trumpet; I believe I am one of the most conceited of men in that way."

"Are you?" says Olive, smiling. "Well, of course, I do not know you sufficiently to either contradict you or agree with you. But, by the little I have seen of you I should not have thought that you were very conceited."

"I should very much like to know what you really do think of me!" he hazards the next moment, leaning his elbows on his knees, and contemplating the girl's face with much interest.

"Would you?" she returns slowly, the rosy red coming swiftly into her soft cheeks.

"Yes, indeed, I should very much like to know. Tell me," he ends, still gazing interestedly at her.

"Oh! no, no! I could not," and she laughs a little soft, confused laugh.

"But why could you not? I should not mind what you thought of me, really. Is it so bad that you can not tell me, then?"

"No—not bad!" she says, low-voiced.

"I shall think you have an awfully bad opinion of me if you don't," he urges once more; "and I shall go back to Pont l'Abbaye with a heavy heart, a sadder if not a wiser man."

Olive laughs again.

"What do you want me to say?" she begins, doubtfully.

"The truth, only the truth. I shall not mind how terrible the verdict is, because I have begged the question of you, and must abide consequently by the answer with a good grace. I only ask you for the truth," impressively.

"Well," she commences, with an effort, the rosy flush still in the abundant, and keeping her eyes fixed steadfastly on the flowing water close to their feet, "I think you are rather—nice!"

She begins bravely enough in her usual tone, but the "nice" ends in a murmur.

Then she jumps to her feet.

"Listen! It's chiming the three-quarters," she says, hurriedly; "one whole half-hour more than we agreed upon. I had no idea the time was going so fast. I must hurry back at once; Nannette will be in a dreadful way about me. You ought to have reminded me when the quarter of an hour was over. You did not keep faith with me as you promised," she adds, with affected reproach to recover her confusion.

He looks up at her standing before him, as she finishes her small reproach.

"Does one ever think of time when one is happy?" he says, slowly. "This afternoon has passed like a dream. You are not going. Stay a little longer, another quarter of an hour—only until five o'clock; it will soon be here now."

She shakes her head quickly.

"Not a minute longer," she rejoins, decidedly; "I have stayed too long already. I must be off this instant. Good-bye!"

"I am coming, too," he says, ignoring her projected farewell; "since you are such a determined young lady, and will go at once, so be it," rising slowly from his seat on the tree-trunk. "As I said before, we came together and we will return together. I could not think of letting you fly back to the market through Quimper by yourself. Nannette might then justly blame me, and say I did not know how to take care of young demoiselles confided to my charge."

"Come then, let us make haste," answers Olive. "I want to get back as quick as ever we possibly can."

And she hurries off as swiftly as her small feet will carry her, while Alan strides on evenly by her side, keeping pace with her half trot.

Neither of the two speak as they hurry on through the quiet old streets of the town. After all, it is really but a short distance with such rapid walking, which earlier in the afternoon they had spun out so pleasantly.

The silence is not irksome in the smallest degree; it only seems as if there was no time for talking now. At the entrance of the market-place Alan stops short.

"I have seen you safe so far," he begins, first to break the silence. "I will not come any further with you, for I intend walking back to Pont l'Abbaye, and shall start on the road at once. It's only nine miles, I believe, and will be a delightful walk now the cooler part of the day has begun. You, of course, are going to drive back, or shall you go by the diligence which starts in about an hour's time?"

"Not by the diligence. Nannette will drive me back in her cart—I came with her; unless she has gone off disgusted with me, and leaves me behind as a punishment for my offence. But I do not think that is very likely, I own. Nannette is too fond of me to do that," Olive ends, with conviction.

"I am not surprised," he says, quietly, looking down at her. "Well, if you are driving back to Pont l'Abbaye I suppose we shall both traverse the same road, and you will probably pass me on the way. I shall look out for you. Good-bye!" and he holds out his hand.

This time Olive does not hesitate one moment, but gives him hers in return as a natural sequence of events.

"I have had a very charming afternoon," he goes on, holding it in his—longer, perhaps, than is strictly necessary to the occasion.

"And so have I," candidly affirms the girl, in response.

Why should she be behindhand in courtesy and expression of pleasure in their joint wander?

"I am glad to hear you say so," he says, still in a quiet voice, "and—thank you for your good opinion of me," releasing her hand.

Olive recognises that he is now speaking of her encomium "Nice!" with which she had endowed him in answer to his question as to what she really thought of him, and she does not feel sure whether she is glad or sorry she told him the unvarnished truth.

"Do you call it good?" she queries, with a little embarrassed laugh.

"Don't you? Is not to be 'nice' the summum bonum of approval? I think so myself, and glory in being called nice. You have not asked me in return what I think of you!" he goes on, quite gravely. "Perhaps, though, you do not care much about knowing one way or the other!"

"Oh, yes, I do!" she answers, with a shade of earnestness in her face. "Of course I would rather people liked than disliked me."

"I don't think they could dislike you, even if they tried," he puts in, suavely.

"I am not so very certain about that," rejoins the girl, with a half-laugh.

"I am sure I could not," Alan says in that same quiet tone of voice which seems natural to him.

"Good-night!" answers Olive, quickly, with a kind of start, as if until this moment she had been day-dreaming, and only now awoke to the remembrance of poor old patient Nannette waiting for her, no doubt wondering where on earth her little mademoiselle had disappeared to.

"And so the day ends!" he reflects, thoughtfully, as they stand facing each other. "This summer day is done, and nothing remains of it but to say good-night and good-bye! How short time really is when one comes to think about it—pleasant time, I mean—and then comes good-bye to show us how short-lived it is! At any rate, I shall see you again soon. Pont l'Abbaye is not such an immense place that one can fail to meet one's fellow sooner or later. I can look forward to another meeting without a doubt as to its probability. Can I not?"

"Oh, yes! Perhaps!" murmurs Olive, hurriedly. "Good-bye again!" and with a little movement of her head in his direction she runs off, and down the old market-place, not without some small inward misgiving on the subject of her lateness.

However, Nannette is there still, and has not driven away, leaving her to her fate. Indeed such an idea never really presented itself as a possible fact to the girl's mind, even when she said it to Alan, for she knew Nannette far too well for that.

The old woman was sitting on her rush-seat, calmly waiting for her; knitting it is true, because she cannot bear being idle even for a few minutes in the day, but markets are over long since, most of the stalls are shut up for that week, and all Nannette's baskets are packed, and lie waiting for their departure.

"Oh, Nannette! I am so sorry!" Olive begins, a little out of breath, and with genuine regret in her voice.

The old woman's face shows no vexation of any kind whatever, but beams round pleasantly on the offender in perfect forgiveness.

"Sorry for what, my mademoiselle!" Nannette queries, smiling to herself as she asks.

"Because I have been gone so long, and when I promised to be back soon, too! But I had no idea it was so late, Nannette. I had not indeed," exclaims Olive, earnestly.

"It is of no matter, my mademoiselle!" returns the old woman, placidly, "just a little longer to wait, that is all. I have not wasted my time, as you see; Andre's stocking is almost done and I am not tired."

"You are a dear old thing not to scold me," says the girl, carelessly. "I know that I do deserve a scolding all the same."

"But you are alone," begins Nannette, quietly, folding up her knitting and placing it in a basket by her side. "how comes it! Where, then, is monsieur?"

"Oh! monsieur as you call him is by this time on the road to Pont l'Abbaye; he intends to walk back," Olive answers, with a slight laugh. "He came back with me as far as the market just now."

"And what takes him to Pont l'Abbaye?" questions Nannette once more.

"He is staying there now. I believe at the hotel Pomme d'Or!"

"Tell me, my mademoiselle, who is this monsieur?" queries the old woman after a small pause in the conversation.

"As far as I know at present, Nannette, he is a gentleman, and his name is Alan Chichester!" returns Olive lightly.

"And how do you come to know him?" says Nannette, finally.

Olive at once relates her experience on the evening of her row down the river to Sablette and back, and what happened on her return.

"Ah!" commented the old woman redactively, when the girl had finished her little historiette of that evening. "And the next day you saw him, you say?"

"Yes! I went to see his sketch as he asked me. There was no harm, Nannette, was there?" says Olive, rather anxiously.

The old woman smiles.

"No harm, my mademoiselle; and since you wished to go and see monsieur's sketch, there could be nothing to say. Madame Robeco, does she also know of this gentleman?" and Nannette slightly lifted her brows in an inquiring fashion as she uttered her query.

"Oh, no!" answers Olive very quickly; "if I had told her she would not have let me go. You know that."

"Well," says Nannette, slowly, "if I thought it harmful for you, I should tell madame without a doubt; but I do not!"

Which sentence Olive knew meant to say that Nannette certainly would not inform against her, come what might.

"And to-day is then the third time you have seen monsieur!" goes on the old woman, gathering up her baskets in her arms preparatory to a move.

"Yes, Nannette," assents the girl, softly, with just a May red flush in her cheeks.

"But it will not be the last, no doubt, since he is at Pont l'Abbaye." Ah! well, a friend is a pleasant thing. It is time you saw a few fresh faces, my mademoiselle, and this one is handsome enough. I do not know what madame will say when she discovers—with a shrug—"but we will not think of that now. Come, my dear one, it is getting to evening; we must go."

Then they gather up the rest of the baskets Olive carrying a few, too, and pack them away in the little cart standing waiting for them, with Bruno looking more like a stuffed quadruped in a museum than a living, breathing animal.

Very soon after they are jogging back along the hard, white, colling, dusty road, which is very quiet now, for all the market carts have traversed it long since; and Bruno, not being the swiftest of mules, is not likely to catch even the last one up.

At last Olive, who has been on the watch the whole way, sees a figure on in front, walking swiftly along the same road they are travelling. He must have been walking very fast to have got on so far.

Perhaps he hears the sound of Bruno's jog-trot on the hard road coming behind him, for he stops, turns, and waits for them to come up.

"Here you are at last!" he sings out pleasantly, as the cart reaches him. "I began to think you were never coming. I've walked about five miles now, I think."

"Perhaps monsieur would like to ride the rest of the way!" Nannette suggests to Olive. "If he does not mind this little cart and Bruno's slowness he is very welcome."

Olive repeats the suggestion half-laughingly. He will not care to ride in an old market cart, I am sure, she thinks as she says it; and consequently feels rather surprised when he accepts the offer with some alacrity.

"Thanks, very much!" he answers; "I shall be very glad to ride behind Bruno, if he won't consider me an intrusion and too heavy a burden. It is getting dusk now; and all the beauty of the evening is going. I have enjoyed the best of it already during my five mile walk out of Quimpaire. Shall I get up behind? Don't move those baskets for me, I shall be quite comfortable as I am," and he steps up quickly into the little quaintly built country cart, just behind Olive.

Then Nannette intimates to Bruno that they

are ready to go on once more, and Bruno makes a move.

It is quite dusk when they reach Pont l'Abbaye, and Alan gets out just at the corner where the roads diverge off—one to the mill, and the other to the village. The latter half of the journey seems to have been quite short, somehow.

Alan thanks Nannette effusively for his ride, declaring that he had no idea until to-day how comfortable a market cart could be.

The old woman accepts his thanks with a twinkle of amusement in her eyes. If I had been alone he would not have found it so comfortable doubtless, she thinks to herself with a very shrewd hit at the truth, for Nannette has all her wits about her, and some of other people's too, I think.

Olive is very silent, as the two, after leaving Alan to go his own way, drive down the small bit of grass-grown road leading to the water-mill. As they reach the gate, where a great sweet chestnut-tree spreads its gaunt arms over the road, she involuntarily heaves the faintest of small sighs, hardly noting that she does so.

"Why do you sigh, my mademoiselle!" asks the old woman, whose sharp ears have caught the sound as it floated by.

"Did I sigh, Nannette!" answers the girl, thoughtfully. "I did not know it. I don't know why I should sigh, I am sure. I have nothing to sigh for, have I?"

"Not yet, certainly, dear one," says Nannette, sagaciously nodding her white cap; "for the future, who can tell. We must all sigh sometimes in our lives. For me I have sighed much—yes, and laughed too. It is never all bitter, or all sweet. We can but sigh and laugh in turn. You will find it true, as I say."

Nannette spoke truly enough, when she said we must all sigh and laugh in turn, but she forgot one thing. Sighs do not always come from a troubled breast, or sorrowing heart.

There is the sigh of—Love!

CHAPTER VIII.

"This bud of love, by summer's ripening breath,
May prove a beauteous flower when next we meet."

When does love begin!

Question most difficult, most hazardous to answer with any truth. It is often a moot point in one's own mind as to the exact moment when one falls, so to speak, in love—where mere liking ends, and love begins.

Indeed, I verily believe hardly any of us, who are themselves interested individuals, can determine the knotty question in a completely satisfactory manner. We are such biased mortals, awayed by so many conflicting points of evidence, that we cannot positively assert when Love unlocks the door of our heart, enters in, and dwells there.

Then, again, to each heart love comes in a separate and distinctly different fashion. With some it marches slowly, evenly, with silent footsteps almost unnoticed. With others it will leap into life suddenly, swiftly, like an arrow shot from a bow, when least dreamt of.

Sometimes we will not acknowledge the dominion of love, even to ourselves, until at last we are forced to do so by a will mightier than our own feeble, mortal one. Again, some of us hold our four arms in welcome to this strange, wayward human passion—this great God Eros, as if he were some priceless gift that we could not grasp too closely in our hands.

If anyone had accused Alan Chichester by saying to him, "I believe you are falling in love with this girl, of whom, as yet, you know nothing, except that she is a charming little lady, evidently very peculiarly placed for some reason or another, which is not yet made apparent, and which puzzles you into thinking a good deal more about her than you would otherwise do!" he would undoubtedly have strenuously denied the soft impeachment in his own unobtrusive, quietly indolent fashion.

And not without truth, too, for he really did

not himself dream that perhaps Eros had fixed upon his heart for a dwelling-place, maybe quite soon, and had already put the little key in the lock ready to enter.

He would, I am sure, have laughingly denied such a fact, thoroughly believing in his own denial, for we are fearfully, terribly blind sometimes in such cases. Anyway, if such was really and truly the fact, why should he feel a sudden pleasure at sight of this same girl coming along under the great branching, leafy chestnuts from the water-mill, down the creek to the river, with her dog Zouave beside her as a matter of course?

And he did feel glad to see her coming. There was no denying it even had he wished to do so; but you see there was no one to accuse him, as it was, and a denial, therefore, was quite unnecessary.

Indeed, to tell the whole truth, he had been waiting for this appearance during most of the glorious August day; resting his lazy limbs in the clumsy old boat at the mouth of the creek where it joined the river, feeling that she would come, because, forsooth, he had asked her.

When their journey home in the cart through the summer evening had been nearly completed, he had said,—

"Come down to the river to-morrow if you can, and we will go a little river-joust together."

And she had answered,—

"I should like to, I will if I can," and there the discussion had begun and ended.

Still he thought and believed she would appear like the wood-nymph in the fairy-tale. And so he waited idly by the water, peering now and again a tree, weed, flower, or rush head that took his fancy.

And it was an errant fancy this summer noon. Not a sober, workaday mind at all, with the river drooping past him, lapping now and then with a sudden little rush against the wooden sides of the wherry.

The lulling restful sound made him drowse in the sunshine, but his grey eyes opened wide enough when he saw under the chestnuts the wood nymph wending her way towards the landing-stage.

He was at once wide awake and on the alert, rising from his resting-place, and stepping on shore to receive her, shutting up the sketch-book he had been dawdling over, as of use now no more.

"Here you are!" he began, cheerfully, hat in hand; "here is the good angel come to dispel *ennui*. I was just beginning to yawn in despair at your non-appearance, and began to fear you were not going to be visible to mortal eyes to-day."

"Miss Daunt kept me with her until just now. I could not get away before," she answered simply; "but surely you ought not to feel *ennui* this glorious afternoon; you have your sketch-book with you!"

"But a sketch-book is not everything one could desire," he affirms, slowly.

"Have you not been doing anything, then?"

"Oh, yes! I have been most busily engaged in being—lazy," he goes on, with a smile. "I took the liberty of lying in your boat; and tried to work; but I failed most ignobly. By-the-by, it is your boat, isn't it?"

"It belongs to André, which amounts to the same thing. He keeps it down here all the summer, for it is such a clumsy, big old thing to get up and down the creek; but in winter it is taken up to the mill and housed in a shed. I think I use it more than anyone."

"By yourself?" he queries, quietly.

"Of course," returns Olive, quickly, "who else should there be? Miss Daunt is not at all fond of the water. She never goes on it; in fact"—Olive adds, with a smile—"when I especially want to get away from her, I go on the river; then I know I am safe."

"Well!" he says, with an answering smile, "let us make haste and get on the river, and then we shall be safe."

"Oh! Miss Daunt has gone to the Convent, she spends a great deal of her time there now, which I am glad of, for I get more liberty," says the girl, naturally, stepping into the boat.

"I am going to be carman," he says, getting in after her; "I'll row, you shall steer, and Zouave will play chaperone. I am an able-bodied man, and must do all the hard work. Besides, I'm an old hand at rowing: many a jaunt up and down river at home in England have I had in my time. I was bow once in the 'Varsity eight. Perhaps, though, you don't know what that means!"

She shakes her head dubiously. Miss Daunt has never mentioned anything about a "Varsity eight" to her, and so she is completely ignorant on the subject.

"Well, I was at the Oxford University then; in fact I took a B.A. degree there."

"Oh!" comments Olive, still in the clouds a good deal. "I am afraid you will not like this kind of rowing after that. These oars are very clumsy things, I know," taking the tiller-ropes in her hands as she speaks.

"I should not call this craft or oars fairly built, I own," he answers, with a laugh; "but so long as it's safe and sound, and we don't go to the bottom, I don't mind. The current runs very strong here, I find."

"Yes, it does. I find the same thing myself when I want to get against the stream. It is as much as I can do to get the boat along at all when the floods are at all out. The Odet then runs like a whirlpool almost," she says, pulling the right rudder-line hard to keep the boat's head in a straight direction, and thinking how much, much pleasanter it is to be rowed like this than to have to row oneself.

Even Zouave seems supremely content, and curls himself round at his mistress's feet with a sigh of satisfaction.

It is very delightful, but the question is, if it is also wise! Neither of the two, however, put such a foolish, disagreeable query to themselves. Indeed, why should they? Happiness does not last long. Let us enjoy it while we can, and then, if you will, sigh over its departure.

"Whither are we bound?" asks Alan, presently, as the river carries them on.

"Well, if you do not mind, I should like to get down to Taditi. I want to hear about the fête!"

"A fête! When, where, and how?" he says with interest. I like a village fête above all things. One sees the country people in all their curious costumes. What is this fête?"

"The Pardon of St. Thaurian. It always comes off every year the last week in August, and is one of the very few gaieties hereabouts that we possess or can boast of. Everyone from far and near goes to it."

"Are you going?" he inquires, leaning forward on his oars a moment while he asks.

"I should like to," she answers, with a small wrinkle of her pretty brow. "But I cannot always get what I like. Miss Daunt has an objection to fêtes of all kinds. She calls them wicked."

"Poor, benighted Miss Daunt, how I pity her!" he says, with comical compassion in his voice.

"Last year she refused to let me go, saying I was too old for such follies, wandering about silly shows. As I am now one year older than I was then, I am certainly too old now. It's a very small amusement, I know. No doubt you would consider it but a very poor affair, but it's something to break the monotony of one's existence. I suppose I am a baby, but I do like to go and see these things," she ends, somewhat pathetically.

"I don't see that you are a baby at all for wishing to go," he argues, stoutly. "I can quite understand your desire. It is not at all wonderful or out of the way. Now do you think, if I came to the mill, made a formal call upon this strict Spartan lady, Miss Daunt, informed her on the subject of my name, age, profession and status, whether she would be gracious enough to allow you to go with me? Of course I should explain to her that I am not a monster in human form, or likely to make away with you. What do you think?"

Olive laughs long and merrily at this suggestion. To her the idea of his confronting Miss

Daunt in her den with such effrontery seems supremely comical. He does not know Miss Daunt evidently, for he could not dream of such a plan as likely to be successful.

"I am very certain she would not," answers the girl, mirthfully.

"But why not?" he continues, still rowing steadily along in the direction of Taditi.

"Miss Daunt is an immense stickler for etiquette, which is one reason," answers Olive, more gravely. "You could not by any means accuse her, as you did me, of being unconventional. Your request would effectively nip any small chance of my being able to go in the bud. I should not be allowed out of her sight for a moment after that, and probably taken to the convent with her on every occasion, which would be awful. I manage to steal a good amount of liberty now, but if Miss Daunt once awakes to the idea of any companion in my goings and comings, that liberty would be stopped at once for good and all. As it is she is always bemoaning my want of dignity and decorum, as she terms it."

"But are you then so completely under her rule and guidance that you are allowed no liberty of mind, at any rate, if not liberty of body?" he asks once more, in some wonderment at an obvious thralldom.

"Yes!" answers the girl, slowly. "I believe I am. Somehow I feel I dare not defy her. I think I am a little afraid of her," she ends, hesitating over the word afraid.

"She must be a Tartar, I fear, then," he puts in quickly, anxious not to draw the girl into making any statements or confessions to him, the mere acquaintance of a moment; "so you don't think she would allow you to go with me?"

"No," returns Olive, briefly.

"I suppose you imagine she might distrust my statements about myself? True, there is that side of the question to be looked at. I confess it. Of course she would know literally nothing of me but just what I chose to tell her. Beyond what my card proclaimed, even you really know nothing of me as yet, do you?"

"Nothing!" returns the girl, candidly.

"I quite recognize that the whole affair would be a little awkward on the surface. For myself I think it is a vast pity we worldlings do not carry our status and pedigrees on our back, legibly printed in big letters to save confusion, for general and satisfactory perusal. It would save an immense amount of trouble and bother to everyone concerned if it could be so. 'Don't you agree with me?'"

"Perhaps it might," assents Olive, with a smile at his remark.

"I am sure it would," he asserts, impressively; "for instance, now, if it were written on my back for me, I should not be obliged to inform you that, as you already know my name is Alan Chichester; further than that, I am the only son of Sir Hubert Chichester, of Seize Court, in the county of Suffolk. I have been to Oxford, where I took a B.A. degree. I have since been reading for the Bar, where I shall never earn a shilling. A barrister ostensibly as a profession, an artist in reality, for the mere pleasure of it, who spends a great deal of his own time and his father's money in wandering Bohemian fashion through different countries, picking up knowledge by the way, and filling his sketch-book in the meantime. It would not be a very great, noble, or even interesting placard that I can see; however, in such wise would it be printed. The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," he ends, jokingly.

Olive listens silently to his account of himself, hardly knowing whether heretofore any comment upon it when it is finished or not.

(To be continued.)

Of twenty-five countries, nineteen have flags with red in them, the first including the United States, England, France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Spain, Denmark, Belgium, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Mexico, Chili, Portugal, Venezuela, and Cuba.

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INVALUABLE FOR LADIES.

More interesting is the fact in connection with the vast collection of plants and flowers taken from ancient Egyptian tombs by a Frenchman known as Mariette Bey that exactly similar plants are still to be found growing in the valley of the Nile. The closest examination fails to reveal the slightest difference between the plants that flourished fifty centuries ago and those which the traveller sees to-day; exactly such flowers as the boy Moses and the children of Joseph picked still bloom unchanged, even in colour. There are to be seen in the Bey's collection blue sprays of larkspur which loving hands laid upon the bodies of those who died a thousand years before Abraham and Sarah went down into Egypt. In the tombs of later date have been found, together with hollyhocks and chrysanthemums, the various fruits, vegetables and grain for which the land has ever been renowned, as figs, dates, olives, grapes, pomegranates, onions, beans, barley and wheat. Around the necks and upon the breasts of those who died at the time Solomon reigned in Jerusalem, about 1000 B.C., were found garlands of celery, which does not appear to have been used at that time as a vegetable by the Egyptians. All these plants, when they were prepared for the funeral ceremonies, were subjected to great heat, by which their form and colour were preserved. Stories are told of wheat having been raised from these ancient grains, but it stands to reason that the immense and protracted heat completely destroyed their germinating power. The unscrupulous natives have sold to travellers ancient wheat in which modern grains have been mixed, but only the modern grains can germinate.

FACETIE.

MRS. MCPHIDGET: "Who wrote the song 'There's Only One Girl in the World for Me'?" Mr. McPhidget: "Adam, I suppose."

"WHAT is fame?" "It is the way a man's family titters when friends come in and tell them what a great man he is."

PAIR AMATEUR: "Yes. I painted this. What school of painting would you call it?" Artist (gently): "Boarding-school."

PATRICK comes to the Morgue to claim a lost relative. Official: "Has he any peculiarity by which he can be recognised?" Pat: "Yes; he is dumb."

"MA, we haven't got company, have we?" "No, Tommie." "Well, what makes you stick your little finger out when you are drinking your tea?"

"DAWSON," said the professor to the young graduate, "can you name the greatest composer of our time?" "Chloroform is about as good as any," was the reply.

TOMMY: "Pa, what's a gena of purest ray serene?" Fond Father: "A woman, my son, who can thoroughly enjoy a ball at which every woman except herself wears diamonds."

PATRONUS: "For anatomical reasons, women cannot stand so long as men." Young Lady: "I guess you never saw a woman having a dress fitted."

REJECTED SUITOR (flippantly): "Oh, well, there are just as good fish in the sea as ever were caught." She: "Yes, George, there are; but unless you change your bait, they are safe."

SHE (wearily): "My head aches awfully." He: "What have you been doing?" She: "I've been trying to decide whether that bargain I got to-day at a bargain-counter is a bargain or not."

"My older brother always got humoured because he was the biggest." "Yes!" "And my other brother got humoured because he was the littlest." "How about you?" "Well, I had to behave myself."

"Let me shake your hand. When I tripped in the dance and went sprawling on the floor, tearing my fair partner's dress, you were the only one in the room who did not laugh." "The lady is my wife, and I paid for the dress."

NEW REPORTER (breathlessly): "Big railroad accident on the A. B. C. road. Shall I go the superintendent of the A. B. C. road for particulars?" City Editor: "Certainly not. Go to the superintendent of the X. Y. Z. road."

"You mustn't mind baby," remarked the fond mother, as the bachelor caller squirmed uneasily: "you see she is cutting her teeth." "Cutting them!" exclaimed the bachelor; "what a barbarous custom! Why don't you let him just—ah—just grow through!"

"It's wonderful," said the Meditative Man, "how one small word may induce an endless train of thought, speaking volumes." "Yes," the Caustic Cad replied. "Take the word 'but,' for instance, when a woman says, 'Of course, it's none of my business; but—'"

MRS. PRICK: "I believe that every one of the writers of these articles making fun of married life are single men. I don't suppose that one of them was ever married." Henry: "N-n-no, dear; he wouldn't be writing jokes about it if he was."

MAUDE: "I think I ought to tell you, Clara, that I met your fiancé in the hall last night, and he kissed me. Of course, the hall was not very well lighted—" Clara (interrupting): "Yes; he told me all about it. He said the hall was dark as pitch, or he would have never made such a fool of himself."

DANKINS: "What means this coolness between Jonson and Joanes—is there a difference between them?" Hankins: "Difference? I should say so. As much difference as there is between a gentleman and a donkey." "H'm. But which is the gentleman and which is the donkey?" "Well, it is just there where they differ."

THE STAR OF HIS SOUL (with tears in her voice): "You have merely nibbled a single rock-cake, Arthur! and yet I would not allow Mary to cook them, but made them myself!" The Man (in protest): "Flora; you shouldn't! You will kill me with your little kindnesses!"

SCHOOL TEACHER (having just read the story of Elsha and the bears): "And now, children, how was it that the bears who ate the forty children did not touch Elsha?" One bright little girl held up her hand. "I know, teacher." "Well, Frida, tell me." "Because they were so full they couldn't eat any more."

"YOUNG MAN," said the old gentleman, "my daughter is too young to marry. A girl of her age cannot be sure of her own mind in a matter of such importance." "I fully realise that," replied the young man, who had just secured the fair one's consent. "That's why I don't want to wait."

"Isn't it strange," remarked the novelist, "that so many of our rich people allow their children to grow up to be so utterly worthless?" "Ob, I don't know," replied the cynic; "when people get rich they're too busy looking after their ancestors to bother much about their posterity."

HENDERSON: "Why did you invite Jackson to spend Sunday with you? It nearly broke his heart when you married Mildred Wilkies." Williamson: "I know it. I thought if Jackson came up and saw how Mildred and her mother rule things in the house over which I am supposed to preside he would be rather glad for himself, after all."

HUSBAND: "Our neighbour across the way has been trying for the last hour to convince me that the woman of to-day is losing her sweetness and simplicity, turning her household duties over to her husband, and becoming masculine and self-assertive." Wife: "Here! Just hold this baby while I go across the way and convince the old fool in about five minutes that he doesn't know what he's talking about."

SHE: "What are you thinking of, Mr. Borelay?" He: "I was thinking it was time to go home." She: "Now here is the difference between men and women; I jumped at that conclusion long ago, and you have just worked it out."

STAGE MANAGER: "You say you have had some stage experience?" Miss Gush: "Oh, yes, indeed! I took the leading part in our church cantata at home once, and—well, to tell you the truth, everybody said I just played my part too lovingly for anything."

WHERE TONS OF HYACINTHS ARE DESTROYED ANNUALLY.

In the May number of the *Windsor Magazine*, S. L. Benson gives a graphic account of a visit to the bulb-farms in Holland. One fact he mentions is worthy of especial comment. "It must be remembered that the flower-time is of little practical importance to the bulb-grower. He wants bulbs, not flowers, and I regret to say that tons of exquisite blooms are destroyed every year. For trade reasons the flowers are not sold; for the sake of the bulbs they must be cut when they approach the zenith of their bloom, therefore they are wantonly destroyed, and this proceeding is an enduring blot upon bulb culture. Presumably they are not available for scent, and it is obvious that they cannot be sent very far if they are to arrive in good condition at their destination. So they are cut and thrown away, taken away in the barges to destruction, to waste the beauty of their colour and shape and fragrance. There is something very wrong here, something that the bulb-farmers should endeavour to remedy, if only by the creation of a market in their own country or in Belgium. Think of the stoma of great cities, of the convalescent wards in big hospitals—remember what the flowers would mean there!"

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SOCIETY.

THE Duke and Duchess of York will return to Sandringham for ten days at Whitecliffe, and they are to be the guests of the Duke and Duchess of Connaught at Bagshot Park during Ascot race week.

PRINCESS CHRISTIAN and PRINCESS VICTORIA of Schleswig-Holstein will accompany the Queen to Scotland on the 22nd inst., but they are to return to Cumberland Lodge on June 24th, in time for Ascot race week. Princess Louise Duchess of Argyll is to be at Balmoral with the Queen during a part of Her Majesty's stay on Deeside, and so is Princess Louise of Battenberg, who is now residing at Frogmore.

PRINCESS LOUISE DUCHESS OF ARGYLL was much attached to the late Duke, who appreciated to the full his Royal daughter-in-law's artistic talents, her general cleverness, grace and charm. The Princess will now have Inverary Castle as a Scotch residence. It is a beautiful place, and is installed with electric light, and most picturequely situated.

It is said in well-informed circles that the Emperor of Russia and the Emperor of Germany are to meet in Vienna before the 18th of August in honour of the seventieth birthday of the Emperor of Austria on that date. The Emperor Francis Joseph told a committee formed to prepare to celebrate that event that it was his intention to spend it in perfect quiet. The visit of the other sovereigns would be made previously.

THE children of Princess Louise Duchess of Fife and the Duke of Fife are, by Letters Patent under the Great Seal granted by the Queen, secured the succession to the Dukedom and Earldom of their father in default of heirs male. The elder, Lady Alexandra Victoria Duff, would succeed as Countess of Macduff and Duchess of Fife, the title passing to her heirs male or female. Failing the survival of the elder girl, Lady Maud would succeed to these honours.

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN is the Colonel of a regiment of German Dragon Guards, who are stationed at Berlin and known as the "Regiment Queen Victoria of England." This command she has held now for many years. In the early years of Her Majesty's reign, when she used to inspect the British Army on parade, the Queen frequently appeared at reviews in a kind of semi-military costume.

THE height of luxurious travelling has been reached by the *Tear and Tearites*. The Empress's private car is upholstered in pale blue satin. The electric lights are all in the form of lilacs, and the train contains writing and tea-tables made of mother-of-pearl. The nursery is the next compartment, and is as comfortable and handsome as the same rooms in any of the *Tear's* palaces. There are dining-rooms and drawing-rooms and several sleeping apartments; in fact, this train is a miniature palace. The wheels are covered with india-rubber tires.

THE Prince and Princess of Wales contemplate passing the Whitecliffe holidays in Paris, and if this plan is carried out they will leave Marlborough House on the evening of Friday, June 1st. The Prince will return to London on Monday, June 11th, and on the afternoon of that day he is to proceed to Ascot for the race week. On Monday, June 18th, the Prince of Wales is to leave town for York, where he is going to attend the annual show of the Royal Agricultural Society, which is to be held on the Knavesmire. His Royal Highness is to stay at the Treasurer's House, near the Minster, during his visit to York, this picturesque residence having been placed at his disposal by Mr. Frank Green, who has recently expended a large sum in carefully restoring it. The Prince will visit the "Royal" show on Tuesday and on Wednesday, and on Thursday morning he is to leave York by special train for Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where he is to lay the foundation-stone of the Diamond Jubilee Infirmary. His Royal Highness will return direct to London when he leaves Newcastle, in the afternoon, travelling up to King's Cross by the East Coast "dining-car" express.

STATISTICS.

THE modern kid-glove goes through the hands of 235 workmen before it is finished.

GOLD-MINING gives constant employment to 45,000 Australian miners.

THE average working life of a London omnibus horse is five years; that of a tram horse four.

THERE are over 200 distinct muscles in the human body, of which the best of us keep about 100 in prime condition by proper use.

IN the Crimean war the British fired 15,000,000 shots and killed 21,000 Russians, or one man to every 700 shots.

A NATIVE of Porto Rico, now in Washington, says that there are 288,000 beggars out of a population of 1,000,000 in that island.

GEMS.

MOST men give up what they like to do in order to get what they like to have.

No man's thoughts are new, but the style of their expression is the never failing novelty which cheers and refreshes man.

THE true critic can understand everything; but he will be the dupe of nothing, and to no convention will he sacrifice his duty, which is to find out and proclaim truth.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

STRAWBERRY CREAM.—Put three-quarters of an ounce of French gelatine into a clean pan with two tablespoonfuls of warm water and the juice of half a lemon. Stir over a gentle heat till the gelatine is quite melted. Now put in two and a half ounces of castor sugar and mix. Carefully whip half a pint of good thick cream. Next mix the cream and four tablespoonfuls of strawberry jam, having first rubbed it through a sieve, together, and strain them into the melted gelatine. Mix thoroughly and pour at once into the mould, which should first be rinsed with cold water. Leave it to set.

MINCED BEEF AND CUCUMBER.—Slice a cucumber rather thickly, and lay it in a dish with a little pepper, salt, and vinegar. Leave it one and a half hours, then take out the slices, and put them in a saucepan with one ounce of butter and a few thin slices of cold ham or bacon. Add enough gravy or stock to cover these, and cook all gently till tender. Then drain off the gravy and thicken it with flour. Pour it over the cucumber again, and sprinkle over one teaspoonful of chopped parsley. Cut the cold beef into neat dice, and make it into a well-flavoured mince. Put it in the middle of a hot dish, and arrange first some cucumber and then some ham round the dish as a border. Pour the thickened gravy round, and serve at once.

DOVER PUDDING.—Ingredients: One and a half pints of milk, three ounces of ground rice, three bay-leaves, three eggs, two ounces of Demerara sugar, two ounces of sultana. Butter a pie-dish, and clean and stalk the sultanas; lay these in the bottom of the dish. Put the milk on to boil in a clean saucepan with the bay-leaves. Heat it slowly so as to well flavour the milk. Then take out the bay-leaves, and shake in the ground rice slowly, stirring it all the time, or it will get lumpy. Let it boil, then put in the sugar and let it get a little cool. Beat up the eggs and, when the mixture is cool enough, stir them in. Pour it into the dish, and bake slowly till a delicate brown. Serve hot or cold. If cold, it might be turned out and a custard poured over it. Or stewed fruit or trachea could be eaten with it.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE natural colour of water is a pure blue.

ONE pound of cork will support a man of ordinary size in the water.

THE effort to make sugar from beet dates back as far as the year 1747.

WINDOW plants in Germany are often watered with cold tea or coffee. The effects are said to be beneficial.

THE violet was the Bonapartist emblem, and at one time many duels were fought over the little blue flower.

CAIRO is the greatest town of Africa. Its inhabitants number 500,000, of which 25,000 are Europeans.

FOUR-FIFTHS of all the garlic eaten in Europe is raised on the two African islands, Zanzibar and Pemba.

BRAZIL is a Portuguese term derived from *brasa*, "a live coal," an allusion to the red dyewood with which the country abounds.

It is said that a woman's voice can be heard in a balloon at a height of two miles, while a man's voice cannot be heard at a greater height than one mile.

THE human eye is from one to one and three-eighths inches wide, and, in a perfectly proportionate face, the distance between the eyes is equal to the width of one.

IN 1850 the tallest building in New York was only five stories high, and the church spires were conspicuous above them. Now there is only one spire in the city as high as the tallest building.

NEARLY every Boer has binocular glasses. With the aid of these he makes fair practice with Mauser rifles at 1,500 yards—a range utterly beyond the British rifle served by a man with the naked eye.

BALLOONS are used for drying linen in Paris laundries. Bamboo frames are attached to a captive balloon, and the clothes are attached to them. The balloon makes six ascents daily, to a height of about 100 feet.

A BRAZILIAN lady never goes shopping. Servants are sent for samples; and if it is a bonnet the *semerita* wants to buy, a box or basket containing all the latest Parisian styles is sent up for her inspection.

AN Act of Parliament was passed in the reign of Edward III. prohibiting anyone from being served at dinner or supper with more than two courses, except on some great holidays specified, on which he might be served with three.

IN the island of Minorca, one of the Philippines, the humming-birds are regarded as little creatures. Thousands of them frequently attack hunters without the slightest provocation, inflicting sometimes serious wounds on the face and neck.

SOME of the Russian peasants in times of scarcity hibernate in the manner of animals. They lie in bed, or, as it is called in Russia "lejka." The bed is made on a flat stove, and all they do during the whole winter is to replenish the stove and support life by a diminished ration of black bread dipped in water.

ONE of the newest table appointments, as an addition to the carving set, is a pair of scissors with long silver handles which are designed to sever the wings of a fowl. This is especially useful to the head of the family, who often spends an unhappy five minutes endeavouring to carve with some resemblance to despatch.

MANY sailors believe that the frigate-bird can start at daybreak with the trade winds from the coast of Africa, and roost the same night upon the American shore. It is at least certain that the bird is the swiftest of winged creatures, and is able to fly, under favourable conditions, 200 miles an hour.

INVESTIGATIONS have shown that the principal source of the Gulf Stream is not the Florida Channel, but the region between and beside the islands of the West Indies. At Bimbioli the volume of this warm water is sixty times as great as the combined volume of all the rivers in the world at their mouths.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

I. G.—Inquire at the War Office.
PURPLE.—It is simply a custom of long standing.
ROB.—Verbal evidence of debt would be sufficient.
C. B.—The man must take action through the County Court.
OSKARD.—It all depends on the agreement you signed.
OLD READER.—You must appeal to the Inland Revenue department.
PATRIOT.—There are eight Field-Marshal in the British Army.
E. H.—The wife dying intestate, the husband takes all her property.
M. B.—Ask your local clergyman or relieving officer; they can advise you.
ELFORD.—The game of cricket dates from 1696, when it was called "club-ball."
S. J.—Our space is too limited to give instruction to be of any practical utility.
RETA.—Decorators should be treated with coal dust and water every time they are re-filled.
ARMON.—It is against United States law to engage a man in this country for situation there.
N. B.—We think by waiting till September or October your prospects of success will be improved.
MOLLY.—If the handles of table knives become discoloured, rub them with bric-a-brac and vinegar.
O. K.—It is not possible except with consent of landlord upon such terms as he thinks fit to propose.
ROGER.—Forms of apprenticeship indenture may be obtained at a law stationer's. They must be stamped.
AMY.—Never put table linen into soap suds until the stains have been removed by pouring boiling water through it.
FRUIT.—Milk and water is an excellent thing with which to bathe the face. Half and half is the right proportion.
C. G.—The exact composition of liddite is not known outside official circles, but picric acid is largely used in its manufacture.
H. B.—After mixing blacklead with water add a little turpentine and liquid ammonia, and you will have a splendid polish.
CLAIRE.—To attempt it properly where only a single garment is in question would cost much more than to send it to the dyer's.
T. L.—The only way to get rid of the holes in your face caused by extraction of teeth is to have false ones put in place of those extracted.
ENILK.—A few drops of eau de Cologne on a soft pad of tissue paper will give a brilliant polish to mirrors, the glass of pictures and crystals.
DICK.—There is no rank between major-general and lieutenant-general; the first is lower than the second, and next step in promotion is general.
WORKING.—If a mistress sends for the doctor without the knowledge or consent of the servant she renders herself liable for the expense incurred.
V. V.—The water should not be hotter than lukewarm; the soap can be better when it is hot; but it must not be used till it has cooled down.
TRIOBLER.—You cannot prevent sounds from ascending, but you might perhaps deaden them somewhat by hanging a heavy cloth curtain across your door.
PERCIVAL.—Golf is supposed to have originated with the Flemings before the fifteenth century. The game has been played in Scotland for several centuries.
ESTHER.—Picture and mirror-frames are preserved from flies by painting them with a brush dipped into a liquid made by boiling three or four onions in a pint of water.
FLORA.—Before putting milk into the saucepan, boil rapidly a few spoonfuls of water (enough to just cover the bottom of the pan), and it will never burn, however fierce the fire.
E. J.—Well pound three heads of garlic, and pass the pulp through a sieve; then pound that with three ounces of butter till you work it into a thick cream; it is then ready.
OSKARD.—It would be better to wait for the young man to write first, and then there would be no impropriety in complying with his request. You write an excellent letter.
H. K.—If a joint is to be served on the table, spread a napkin under the dish so that the cloth will not be splashed. When this is done the napkin must be removed at dessert.
HUCRO.—There should be no difficulty in getting a reading ticket for the British Museum. Make your application, and say what you want to do; in reply you will receive a form to fill up.
ALLIANCE.—The bridegroom waits at the classical steps for the bride. He would, if necessary, take a seat in the pew nearest the chancel. The bride and bridegroom alone go up to the altar. Your writing is well-formed—it is certainly not bad.

RUFERT.—Yes, we should certainly recommend the use of dumb-bells. You can get them of various weights; you should be careful to have them to accommodate your strength.

CUVACOR.—Furniture is not always a very safe guide to the faciliation of the individual, but it is accepted as proved that the cruel original is always low-browed and forbidding in appearance.

H. B.—The shamrock is the symbol of Ireland because it was selected by St. Patrick to prove to the Irish the doctrine of the Trinity. Hence the "wearing of the green" on St. Patrick's day.

ROGER.—Peel and wipe them. Then cut into thin slices and throw into a frying-pan containing an abundance of hot lard. As soon as they become brown and crispy put into a colander to drain, and serve hot.

C. B.—The rhyme you are in search of is as follows:—"Tender-handed grasp a nattle and it stings you for your pains; Grasp it like a man of nattle, and it soft as silk remains."

CONSTANT READER.—Every Irish soldier being in the employment of the British Government is in consequence a British soldier, just as Scotch, Welsh, and colonial soldiers are all British, though wearing different nationalities.

E. R.—Applicants for situations have opportunity given for displaying their ability; a beginner is known as a fourth-class fireman, and receives 35s. a week; he advances to the other grades as his experience increases.

REGULAR READER.—Go out early in the morning with a box containing quicklime powdered by half-shaking it. Every place infested with slugs should be sown liberally thick with it, watching for their time of emerging, and so catching them all outside.

A SONG OF LOVE.

Pipe a song of love, most sweet,
 And pipe a song of pleasure;
 Love is winged with merry feet
 To tread a merry measure.

Pipe a song for me, love,
 A wild, sweet song, my poet;
 Tell our joy to larks above,
 And bid the thrushes know it.

Pipe beside the running streams
 And wistful music marry;
 Pipe of love till happy dreams
 Like robins ever tarry.

Pipe and make the meadows glad,
 And pipe a blithesome ditty;
 Mournful notes make lovers sad,
 And change sweet love to pity.

Pipe down the hanging lanes,
 And make the breezes mellow;
 Pipe a song for Cupid's pains,
 And charm the roguish fellow.

ELIXIR.—In absence of any arrangement with the landlord to do the whitewashing, we are afraid it must be done at your expense, especially if the premises are being put to a purpose somewhat different from the one they were leased for.

A. L.—Send magazines by the ordinary parcel post, or carriage paid to embarking at 500 lbs. Southampton, who will send them on by first transport in which room is available; full information can be obtained at post-offices.

LAURA.—The right method of scouring boards is simple and effective. Take twelve parts of clean sand, eight parts of soft soap, and four parts of lime; use the mixture with a scrubbing brush, and let the floor be rinsed well afterwards.

LINA.—Mix a teaspoonful of ammonia with a cup of water, and use a little of this liquid to form a paste with whiting. Polish the article to be cleaned with the paste, using a soft leather to apply it and another to dry it.

DOUGLASS.—Your father could by will give the house to an utter stranger if he thought fit; an eldest son has no preference whatever at division of an estate, except where father dies without making a will and leaves heritable property—that is house or lands.

L. L.—The only way to obtain a situation of the kind described is to approach superintendents and managers of lines, either personally or by private letter, mentioning the qualifications which you possess, and think likely to be of service in the situation.

T. P.—First remove the paint by rubbing it with a mixture in equal quantities of turpentine and pure alcohol; this will soften the paint; it can then be easily rubbed off; for the oil and greaseiness that remains sponge with diluted benzine collie, and finally with pure water.

ELLEN.—The great thing in baking a custard is to prevent it from boiling, because if it boils it is full of holes, and the appearance is completely spoiled. To prevent this, place the dish the custard is in in a larger dish half full of water. The water will boil but not the custard, and it will cook quite satisfactorily. Take out as soon as it is set.

EDWARD.—The young lady apparently does not know her own mind. We should say if you discontinued your visits for some time and left her to herself she might be able to come to some conclusion with regard to her feelings in the matter.

ROSE.—Under the circumstances which you mention, the lady generally does not attend the entertainment. If she has reason to believe that the slight to her fiancé is intentional, she certainly does not attend.

DETRETERED.—The superstition respecting the opal is very old; the ancient Greeks were acquainted with it. Most likely it took its rise in the variety of colours it presents. Being of such shifting hue, it was taken to be an emblem of inconsistency and deceit.

LORENA.—A girl should never marry a man that she may reform him. If he is in need of reformation let him prove himself worthy by turning from evil and setting his face steadfastly and perseveringly to good before he asks a girl to surrender herself and her life to him.

P. L.—For an uncle or aunt, crape is very rarely worn at all, but black, relieved with jet or silk, for three months, and half-mourning for another three months. The mourning worn for first cousins is very slight—viz., black, without crape, for two or three months.

MARIE.—Bees-wax, one ounce; white wax one quarter of an ounce; Castile soap, one ounce; boiling water, one pint; when cold, add turpentine, half pint, spirits of wine, half pint. This should be well mixed and rubbed on with one cloth and polished with another.

ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.—Marriage with a deceased wife's sister has always been prohibited by the law of England; but such marriages were merely voidable during the lives of the parties until 1835, when an Act was passed making all such unions previously contracted valid, but declaring all subsequent ones to be absolutely void.

MARIE.—Coffee stains can be removed as long as they have not been touched with soap (which converts such stains into a dye) by pouring through the stained portion, when stretched over a cup or bowl, clean, soft, boiling water, and if this is not sufficient, rub in a little powdered borax, and again pour the boiling water through.

CHRY.—You should not permit the gentleman to frequently walk home with you, unless the streets are unsafe, or for some good reason you need an escort, and your betrothed is unable to be present. If, however, you accept the gentleman's escort, it is rude to desert him in the street for another gentleman. If your betrothed meets you at the door of the shop, you should accept his company instead of the other gentleman's.

HOMO.—1. According to the "Language of Flowers," the hyacinth signifies injustice; the rose geranium, preference; apple geranium, present preference; fish geranium, disappointed expectation; nutmeg geranium, an unexpected meeting; scarlet geranium, comforting; pennyroyal, flee away. 2. Write a letter to the young gentleman expressing your pleasure in the possession of his photograph. 3. Spelling and grammatical instruction are both satisfactory, but writing will admit of improvement.

L. M. H.—St. Peter's Church, called by Gibson "the most glorious structure that has ever been applied to the use of religion," was begun in 1459 by Pope Nicholas V. The work of building progressed slowly. According to the designs of Bramante, a noted architect, who superintended the building under Pope Julius II., the church was to be built in the form of a Latin cross. In 1530 the plans were modified so as to admit of the shaping of the structure in the form of a Greek cross. A later architect returned to Bramante's plan, but the work was soon entrusted to Michael Angelo, who changed the plans again, preferring the design of a Greek cross. In 1605 Pope Paul V. changed the ground plan to the Latin cross formation. The nave of the church was finished in 1612, and the facade and portico in 1614. The church was dedicated by Pope Urban VIII. In 1635, one hundred and seventy-six years after the beginning of the foundation. Various minor alterations and additions have since that year been made.

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